MUSINGS OF AN OLD SHIKARI

REFLECTIONS ON LIFE AND SPORT IN JUNGLE INDIA

By
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(LATE INDIAN ARMY)

With Illustrations from Photographs and Drawings by the Author

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CONTENTS

		PAGE
I.	OF AN INDIAN NIGHT	1
II.	INFLUENCES	6
III.	EARLY DAYS	16
IV.	SEVEN JUNGLE YEARS	47
V.	*SUS CRISTATUS*	149
VI.	BUFFALO AND CHÍTAL	162
VII.	PUNKAH AND THERMANTIDOTE	172
VIII.	IN BISON LAND	201
IX.	AFTER TWENTY YEARS	250
X.	VARIOUS MUSINGS	275
XI.	"HIMSELF" AND "GRANDSON"	289

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ILLUSTRATIONS

	FACING PAGE
JUNGLE DAWN (*in colour*)	*Frontispiece*
FIFTY YEARS AGO	6
ON THE FORTH	14
DAWN ON THE TANK	32
THE PICK-UP	32
BELOW THE "BUND"	34
DAULATABAD	38
CHÁNDRABHÁGA	50
RUINS IN GÁWALGARH FORT	52
CHIKALDA FROM THE SOUTH-EAST	56
A CAPARISONED ELEPHANT	62
BELOW PÁNCHBA KHÓLA	62
HOT-WEATHER—	
A JUNGLE ROAD	64
A JUNGLE POOL	64
A CHIKALDA VERANDAH	72
A JUNGLE RAMBLE	72
A JUNGLE TRILOGY	74
OUT HE CAME	88
A JUNGLE ROAD, COLD-WEATHER	90
AT THE SOILING POOL	96

FACING PAGE

LALLU'S SÁMBAR ARE ALL HUGE 96

A KÓRKU VILLAGE 110

MEMORIES OF ELLICHPUR 150

SUS CRISTATUS 156

A HOT HILL-SIDE 210

SHADE 210

IN BISON LAND 242

A FORGOTTEN SHRINE 242

THE BLIND BULL 248

IN "EKKAS" TO BLACKBUCK COUNTRY . . . 252

HIS FIRST BUCK 252

CHIKALDA REVISITED 256

MÉLGHÁT JUNGLES, COLD-WEATHER 258

A JUNGLE BIVOUAC 260

GÁRÁ HUA! 262

SHIKÁR HUA! 262

THE REAL KÓLHA BALÚ 268

ANTE-PRANDIAL 284

POST-PRANDIAL 284

MOUTH OF BURHÁNPUR VALLEY 290

"GRANDSON" 296

"HIMSELF" 304

HINDUSTÁNI PRONUNCIATION

HIEFLY a matter of vowels, viz :

á pronounced as a in arm.
a „ „ u in up.
terminal " a " between these.
í pronounced as ee in bee.
i „ „ i in if.
é „ „ eh in grey.
o „ „ o in bone.
ú „ „ u in rule.
u „ „ u in bull.
ai „ „ in aisle.
au or ao pronounced as ow in cow.

ombinations of consonants with h, as in bh, gh, th, give value to ach letter, except in :

ch pronounced as in church.
kh „ „ ch in loch.
ph „ „ in phial.

The transliteration and pronunciation of Indian words is very regular, owing to the carelessness of bygone times.

Thus *Múmbai* and *Káhnpúr* are established as " Bombay " and Cawnpore," together with many common words other than ace-names. Side by side with these runs the majority of Indian ords that are now more or less correctly transliterated after the -called " Hunterian " system.

Our usage varies in different parts of India as well as individually, om the pedantry that produces such gems as *Qurán* and *Iráq* the amusingly effective vocabulary of Thomas Atkins.

Our average—as employed in these pages—falls comfortably etween such extremes.

After a little preliminary indication, I have avoided the rather ritating continuance of vowel-accents.

MUSINGS OF AN OLD SHIKARI

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I

OF AN INDIAN NIGHT

NIGHT on the Plateau. The Central Provinces Plateau. The pleasant Sátpúra-buttressed uplands of Bétúl, Chindwára, Seóni—each a small "Civil Station" and headquarters of its district of the same name, each a little unit of the British *Ráj*; and self-contained save for the soldiers, that are at Ellichpore, Nagpore, Jubbulpore—seventy, a hundred, two hundred miles away.

Each, from afar, in 1870 as at the present day, a plexus of larger trees, a closely timbered park, shimmering under the Indian sun and set in wide, woody, cultivated plain that rolls, a chequer of receding yellow, green, and blue to distant gold-brown ridges of dry grass and thin jungle.

Close at hand, emerging here and there from the trees of their shady "compounds," some half-dozen scattered, colour-washed bungalows, thatch or tiled roof, for about as many British officials—a Deputy Commissioner; with his assistants, and coadjutors of the Police, Forest, Public Works, and Medical services. Smooth, red, tree-bordered roads. Order and tidiness everywhere. A tiny Church, or its substitute. A Circuit House; for sessions time. A *Kachéri*; Government Offices of the district. A dák bungalow; for sahibs a-travel. Post and telegraph office. A Mission and its buildings. Then the great trees of the well-kept "Company *Bágh*" or Government garden, one of the many relics of the Honourable East India Company—with the small pavilion, croquet and badminton lawns of those days.

At some little—and decorous—distance, the *Saddar Bazar*

—lineal descendant of the bygone sutler's camp—the Police Lines, and Jail. These all as exotic as the white man himself.

Beyond, yet included within the pale, the native town, and —the Plateau. . . .

Night, and Bétúl. Moonlight, and the Deputy Commissioner's bungalow. The month December . . . nearly sixty Decembers ago.

The house is very quiet ; its deep, pillared portico in darkness, save where, from within, through parted door-panels, lamplight cuts yellow across the bamboo matting of the verandah, silhouetting a long cane chair and trellis-straying tendrils of passion-flower, ipomea.

Out in the open, in an absolute calm, brilliant moonlight and bejewelled clarity of the Indian night sky. Loom of tall roof that stretches wide and low-eaved over the whole building. Motionless polished leaves of orange and lime bushes, of tall *jámún* and mango, shading to black velvet depths that are grateful by day, intriguing at night. Softer drooping foliage of the *nim*—whose shelter, so runs the native proverb, is as that of a mother's love.

All along the house-front, and beyond, duskily bordering the whiteness of the moon-drenched drive, is ranged the exiles' make-believe—the pot garden—where a few cherished plants of the homeland meet the tropical exuberance of croton, coleus, poinsettia, *gloriosa superba*. Scents almost too sweet, too heavy, mingle with that wonderful fragrance of earth that is sun-baked by day and watered at evening shade. And the night strikes chill, even cold, comparatively, at about fifty degrees of temperature ; for it is the " cold-weather " of this mid-India, and the plateau is more than two thousand feet above the sea.

Past slumbering flower-beds and ghost-armed candelabra-euphorbia the pale perspective of the drive leads to dim white gate-pillars that are framed in rampant bougainvillæa, o'er-stretched by arms of wide-branching " gold-mohur." Across the rather pathetic " lawn," with its groups of flowering

shrubs, the garden falls away to thorn hedges and a misty depression. There is a "nullah" down there, as the frogs sleepily announce, and beyond, on its farther bank, a couple of hundred yards distant, a great close-set grove or "tope" of wild mangoes, large, rounded, full-foliaged trees, moon-silvered above, ebon and mysterious beneath. Behind them recedes a wide champaign of sleeping cultivation—tall millets, stretches of pulses, of cotton, all dimly merged together and bounded afar by a soft outline of low jungly hills.

India sleeps more of a cold-weather night than of a hot; for then the tyrannies of the summer sun tend to turn day into night and night into day. Now, doors are closed, flat roofs deserted, and tomtoms do not resound afar. But there are denizens of the wild, and not a few, now a-roam, as testifies the distant cry of some lonely, blanketed, *machán*-perched field-watcher—not to mention the dismal croak of the *chaukidár* in a neighbouring compound: while, closer at hand, queer night-bird calls recur; flying-foxes, great fruit-bats, may be heard rustling or flapping softly in the recesses of some native fruit-tree; and tiny screech-owls—the spotted owlet—at long intervals set up their unexpected little paroxysms of chuckling vociferation.

A softly shrilling undertone of insect sound is ceaseless, eternal; punctuated by the intermittent "*sreep . . . sreep*" of crickets that keep to the secret black.

The hour is late, and the moon, coming near to her full, has passed the zenith. Yet a wakefulness, an indefinite sense of waiting, of expectancy, seems to haunt the stillness of the little demesne. That lamp burns on; and, behind the bungalow, by the servants' quarters, there is a door ajar; a chink of light; low murmur of voices; the occasional stamp of a stabled horse. Later, a hinge creaks, wrapped native figures emerge, stand together awhile, and anon hesitatingly disperse. The night moves softly on.

At last, at long last, a little tension seems to snap. In a distant part of the bungalow the brooding quiet is broken by the unlatching of a window . . . and forthwith there issues

an extraordinary sound! Small . . . of peculiar vocality . . . ceaseless . . . insistent . . . ridiculous. But curiously disquieting! Thin sobbings. Tiny chokings. . . . Then starker gusts of distinctly irascible discomfort, the epitome, surely, of physical woe—yet of an incredible peremptoriness; brooking no delays!

Startlingly soon, and as if in obedience to that feeble cry, a new note is added to the listening night.

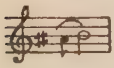
It comes from beyond the nullah, down by the dark mango grove. Grievous, infinitely sorrowful, wells out the age-old lament, the long-drawn ululation, the low, dolorous note to which even the most domesticated of the race at times revert, the voice of the canine prime. It mounts the moonbeam's path; it lingers; it slowly dies—falling half a semitone, in minor cadence:

"Oooooo . . . ooh!"

Presently it is repeated, a little louder, slightly higher pitched:

"Wooooo . . . ooh!"

Then the raucous, wrenching solo of the old dog jackal breaks fiercely in:



"o-WHERE? o-WHERE? o-WHERE-WHERE? o-WHERE?"

To which a vociferous rival immediately adds, in savage duet:

"Yes, *WHERE? WHERE-WHERE? WHERE?* Yes, *WHERE?*"

Trio and quartette quickly exacerbate the sound-values, which swell furiously to a ravening chorus, a rapidly reiterated, frantically sustained concatenation of:

"WHERE? WHERE? THERE! THERE! THERE!"

changing at its tensest height and climax to sharper and triumphant yells—as of a hundred straining larynxes:

"HERE! HERE! HERE! WHERE? WHERE? HERE! HERE! HERE! HEE-RE, HEEEE-RE! HEE-YAH! HEE . . . YAH! HEE . . . EE . . . EE . . . YAH! HERE-HERE-HERE-HERE-HERE-HEEEEEEEYAH!"

Thirty, forty seconds, indescribable clamour assaults the welkin; then, gradually, the yelling orgy slackens, abates, and dies away, lingering at the last on a few high-pitched, almost inaudible sniggers and snivellings of young vixens and cubs:

"Hee . . . . ee . . . . eeeeee-yah!"

The shrieking orgasm of sound has left the ear outraged, numbed; and silence falls doubly sweet as night reasserts her gentle sway, swings back on her quiet course.

And now, far away, down at the Police Lines, the sentry mallets his bell.

Silvered by distance, each lingering note floats ringing . . . pulsing . . . on the still air.

Twelve slow solemn strokes.

The witching hour.

On the fragile page of an old diary, traced in the delicate characters of a bygone time, are the faded words:

"A—— was born just before midnight, and I shall never forget how his first infantile cries were mingled with the howling of jackals."

II

INFLUENCES

A BUNDLE of reminiscences needs no formal introduction or preface. The fact that little short of sixty years has elapsed since the night that has just been described, and the inferences to be drawn from title and title page, will furnish the reader with his bearings and serve to orientate the mental chart that kindles life in the written word.

For the rest—explanatory, consequential, apologetic—let it find its place as the musing proceeds.

" How to begin " is the first stumbling-block of the adventurer in prose ; which is my excuse for beginning at the beginning. Moreover, it is interesting to trace, if possible, the why and wherefore of a powerful enthusiasm—a ruling passion. And in the *shikár* books that I have read, and liked, I find that the experiences of kindred spirits have an increased appeal when they furnish means of comparison with one's own circumstancing.

By this time, naturally, I have come to some conclusions as to the reasons for my own zeal for shikar—a term embracing all field sport—but it was only recently, in seeking accuracy as regards the natural conditions prevailing on a certain night, that it was ascertained that the moon was then in her twelfth day, lacking only three nights to her full.

Need the charm of this discovery be described ?

That, of course, is one of the best of the hunter's moons ; perfect for a jungle vigil, or for a prowl through sleeping woods, when the swift extinguishing of the tropic day finds Dian's lamp not only filled and trimmed for a night-long burning, but held high in heaven ere the sun's light shall have begun to fail.

FIFTY YEARS AGO

And the glamour of night: ever strong to move humanity and the essential solitude of the spirit; compelling for followers of Nimrod whose occasions particularly subject them to its influence.

What wonder, then, that one of these should mark an agreeable if idle coincidence, trifle awhile with the fancy that the moon-goddess and the cry of the wild received him at his first coming no less surely than they have held him ever since?

And what influence shall implant an unusually strong night-sense; such enchantment of darkling woods, starlit hills, and the vague sounds and dim shapes that haunt them; such familiarity and facility with nocturnal conditions as are only in part attributable to practice or training?

Ere I detect a friend's smile anent these horoscopic musings of mine let me remind him that the ancients had their reasons for reposing the tutelage of both moon and hunting in the sister of Apollo. As for mine enemy, and the little matter of my birth-song—he of the furtive, vocal pack best knows on whom the jackal waits.

While thus discussing a few preliminaries it occurs to me that to some these pages may seem too idyllic, out of keeping with so physical an affair as the hunting of game. But these are musings, mark you, of an old—and possibly garrulous—shikári; and when the chair is drawn up, the pipe draws well, and the firelight flickers on . . . well, flickers, then the world of crude happenings is liable to melt into mellow reminiscence.

Some shikar books are, to my mind, marred by an introduction in which the writer laboriously restates the many arguments in support of what is, when all is said and done, one of the least objectionably pervertible of human instincts; his intention being, presumably, to refute the point of view of an insignificant breed of Pecksniffs—who, by the way, have recently elaborated a little catchword of their own, the phrase "blood sports." I do not propose so to waste time over conscientious objectors, and will merely remark that man's nature is to pursue something—be it good, evil, happiness, knowledge, power, fame, notoriety, riches, women—and that

for the few who really have not even a latent interest in honest British field sport I am genuinely sorry.

One parting shot, however, I will fire.

The strength of the case for true wild sport is increased —particularly in these noble times—by the fact that " there'th no money in it."

There certainly was none in it for me, and that was how my shikar had to be done, being made possible only by circumstances of vocation and location coupled with a boundless zeal in making the most of any chances that might come my way. Those opportunities were neither very frequent nor great : far less so, to take but two instances, than those of a forest officer, or of the man of means and leisure for extended travel. Nor must it be imagined that even in my " jungle years " all my available leave was spent in shikar. Apart from other obligations, life must hold more than the one interest, even for the most desperate enthusiast ; had I, for instance, been one of the old-time African hunter-explorers —for which nature undoubtedly intended me—my mode of living must have been considerably changed from time to time.

It seems to me that it is incumbent on the writer of a book of this sort to be descriptive, provide a clear idea of the scene of events, and do so before the reader has time to form his own inevitable mind-pictures—which, unless he has " been, and seen "—can only be fanciful and erroneous. This has been brought home to me in looking over the pages of a youthful effort, now a quarter of a century old, which I thought would be read only by a few kindred spirits, and which, accordingly, was written with an eye to experts only.

Since, for one reason and another, I cannot offer the pictorial aid that I desire—and I abjectly apologise for my attempts to draw—my obligation must be eked out by considerable verbal delineation ; which the initiated can skip.

A few of the better, impersonal photographs have been furnished by old friends of Indian days. Many of the others,

mere "snap-shots," owe their egotistical nature to the fact that they were intended for home display only. Also, they do not necessarily represent my better specimens of big game. One's "record head" does not necessarily mean a good picture or represent the best or most exciting bit of sport—although the sight of what is obviously a prize has been known to affect marksmanship. Musings VI, VIII, and XI are republished by courtesy of *The Indian Field*, *The Asian*, and *Game and Gun*, in the pages of which they have appeared during the past twenty-five years.

I think that I have read somewhere that, as a young man, Selous's hunting imagination was first fired by the writings of Roualeyn Gordon Cumming—at which I do not wonder; they are still very much alive, and their remarkable author may safely be set down as the father, the grandfather of African hunters. He was the first to hunt in the then utterly savage country about the Upper Limpopo now traversed by the Mafeking-Buluwayo railway; and his method with elephants was to gallop a herd, cut out the best bull, and ride into and shoot it, his sole nether garment consisting of . . . *a kilt*!

Truly were there giants in those days! Sometime wearer of a kilt of my very own (my brothers were junior to me) and staunch compatriot and admirer of Cumming though I be, I draw the line at the garb of old Gaul for a tropical or any other "point to point." Small wonder that the stock of the great hunter's elephant rifle, carried sporran-wise in those terrible gallops through "wait-a-bit" thorn, was worn away as though gnawed by rats.

In recalling the names of such prodigies it seems ridiculous to prate of my minor experiences, but perhaps I may say that what first stimulated my youthful imagination was a series of that delightful publication of the long ago, the *Oriental Sporting Magazine*. That, with many another sporting book, I found on my father's bookshelves, he himself having done a lot of shooting in the East.

We lived then about a mile from the small town of Inver-

ness, an old-fashioned family including six brothers and sisters, in a home and surroundings ideal for true country boys.

Those were the good Victorian days, and the palmy days of Indian service, with a two-shilling rupee ; and life generally was far simpler and less manipulated than in these enlightened times. We spent a happy out-door childhood with our ponies, fishing, a little shooting, a real winter with skating every year, a splendid, tonic climate—although the summer might be a little slow in coming—and the glorious northern highlands all around.

My father, of whom, alas, we saw but little—that curse of an Indian career—was a keen fisherman ; and many a fine salmon did I watch him take out of the Ness. My way to day-school, too, led down the river's bank and across it, and often I risked a tanning as I lingered, fascinated, to see some angler kill his fish.

After careful coaching in the handling of firearms, my first legitimate weapon was a ·410-bore " walking-stick gun "—of which more anon ; but boys will be boys, so many and strange were the unlawful arms that passed through our hands (and once a derringer bullet through my little finger) and, not seldom, into the keeping of a watchful mother, who, ere taking over sole charge of us, had undoubtedly been coached in the handling of boys !

Oh, those young days ! That delightful old home ! The variegated life we led our gardener, a gentleman whose northern diction was of paraphrastic quaintness—especially, for instance, on the casual arrival of a " proj " from the model " 81-ton gun " mounted on a distant monitor, just as he had got balanced on his pruning-ladder. Then the blowing-up of the old swan (thitherto a bird of insufferable pride) enticed over a soda-water-bottle-*cum*-black-powder minefield by means of food cast on the face of the waters. And that same pond, a couple of acres of " ornamental water " of unnaturally involute design—bays, narrows, bridges, island, and a burn flowing through ; yet home of some jolly fine trout, and invaluable training in range and delicacy of fly-casting on a still evening.

There, too, was employed a home-made form of dry-fly work long before we wet-fly northerners were aware of it as a recognised branch of angling art.

Still can I see my brothers—one sleeps in France, the other in far Chittagong—on our long expeditions into the moor and countryside. The swimming of peaty lochs, the air above us thick with beating wings, to some screaming islet where an unwary foot surely crushed the closely set sea-birds' nests. The sensation of yolk and eggshell between bare toes is with me still. The lovely, long, mating cry of the curlews, " quivering-quivering-quivering " on the heathery air as we crawled and spied the moor, manœuvring to discover the nest. The old cock grouse's " Go-back, go-back ! " Then, nearer home, the out-lying rabbit outwitted from his own wood. And, in autumn, the wary, pine-perched cushat, stealthily drawn nearer and nearer to at each fatal access of his cooing.

Another, a school-holiday scene, by Argyllshire fiords, where Creag Ghorm looks down more than two thousand feet to dark Loch Linnhe. The revolver cartridge that more or less fitted the walking-stick gun ! And the ancient and curly old ram, lord of the half-wild herds that roamed those desolate heights !

The toss for the shot. The winner's long, close, and eagerly watched stalk. . . . The thrilling ceremonial of the gralloch. The sudden, frightful interruption of a panicked sentry's entirely visionary shepherd. The hurriedly-snatched peats to conceal our ghastly crime. And the stark plunge of three pairs of kilted legs for the birch woods below—that same forest of Lettermore, by the way, where R. L. S. brings David Balfour to Alan Breck, on the murder, or perhaps we would better say shooting of " Red Fox " Campbell.

For towns we had no use. Even our own little country capital was tolerated only as a munitions dump, as affording an occasional gloat over the contents of one Snowie's shop, repository also of fishing tackle and taxidermy. And later, when at public school in Edinburgh, followed in its turn by Sandhurst, it was the country that drew us, every time, rather than any " up-town " on Sundays. Very clear are my first

recollections and horror of London, for which my boyish mind had all the old-fashioned Highlander's withering contempt, when in a " growler " I passed through the mean streets that lie between Euston and Waterloo.

Our young days coincided with those of the bicycle. Almost were we contemporary with the velocipede—when finality seemed to have been reached in the shape of the " high bicycle," the immense, gearless, direct-drive wheel, from the steering head of which a long backbone closely followed its periphery down to a ridiculously small trailer. A simple, spidery, not inelegant machine, yet endowed with a demoniac power of lowering its rider's prestige.

On the most trivial excuse—such as a stone or incautiously applied brake or back-pedalling, the frame and small wheel instantly left the ground, revolved as satellites to the big wheel, and, with the rider's thighs held inexorably under the handle-bar, hurled him face downwards to the road. Then, as though not content with so hollow a victory, the machine smote its man from behind.

Cunning riders, coasting downhill, sought to avoid this by placing legs over handle-bar; but this pea-on-a-drum attitude, combined with speed and " a long way to go " produced complications for any but a professional acrobat. True, some master mind did invent a brake for the trailing wheel: but, as my contemporaries may recollect, this seemed only to increase the high bicycle's capacity for surprises on slippery surfaces.

The correct dress for high bicyclists, in days that were more formal than the present, was a skin-tight suiting of some thin, " clinging " material—presumably on stream-line principles—crowned by an exceedingly small lancer or polo cap; and the correct colour, for no known reason, was of a clerical gloom. Thus, sombre flights of Mephistophelian young men on huge wheels haunted the roads, and were known as " cads on castors," " Upper Tooting Bicycle Clubs," etc. Which reminds me of the dreadful situation created later on, when, on first joining the Service and the home battalion of my regi-

ment, the Adjutant saw my cab arrive at barracks with one of the accursed machines atop.

However, in our mid teens, the " safety " bicycle was born, iconoclast-to-be of such prejudices, increasing one's radius of action with much greater comfort. Ours were early Humbers ; and their designer must have owed the high bike one, for he had revenged himself by putting a 30-inch driving wheel behind and a little 'un in front. On those strange vehicles and their solid-rubber pre-Dunlop tyres, we covered some thousands of miles, indefatigably scouring the country, our longest non-sleep mileage amounting to 140.

It would be ungrateful to forget our catapults ! Workmanlike little weapons for occasions that demanded silence and secrecy ; and in any case very pleasant companions, just as is the archer's roving shaft. Long shots, short shots, ranging plugs into water, entertaining little surprises for high-perched crows, amusing little kicks-up-behind of hairy-heeled farm-horses a-graze, and all the while the mounting tally of tiny knicks down the well-smoothed handle that denoted more serious work—and all not to mention a sudden and terrible temptation one winter evening, resulting in a mysterious fall of shattered gas-lamp glass on the helmet of a dozing policeman !

Our style was the long-draw catapult, constructed of penny-the-foot square elastic, pulled to the cheek-bone and directed by " feel," not " sighted " like the short " tweaker." Incessant practice made for wonderful accuracy and rapidity of fire ; and in those days a good " catty," a pocketful of swan-shot, and lots of water-rats—or a good squirrel wood—made for an afternoon of joy. Nor is the catapult to be despised in a Surrey garden to-day—a fine antidote for the horticultural cat, or stray cur on odious comparisons intent—where its production recently drew a whoop of delight from another old " catty " expert with whom we had not foregathered for close on forty years.

After the death of my father, the Inverness home was broken up, and the exchange of the Highlands for Edinburgh

met with scant appreciation. It was not long, however, before we found a fresh outlet for hunting instincts, on the estuaries of Forth and of Solway. Aided by the fascinating wildfowling lore of Payne-Galwey, Colonel Peter Hawker, and others, a diminutive single-handed gunning punt was constructed. A real punt gun was beyond our means, but, by dint of diligent search in gunmakers' shops, a great treasure was unearthed in the shape of a muzzle-loading 7-gauge double-barrelled gun.

This was a beautiful old weapon, by Pape of Newcastle, its balance perfect, in spite of its long barrels. It made a wonderful pattern with No. 3 shot. Seven drams of black—large grain, of course, for slow combustion—was its usual load, with two ounces of shot.

Its best work, as I see from a diary of those days, was seven flighting curlews to one barrel, used from the shoulder—a feat of which we were not a little proud. Among less wary and more gregarious shore birds its excution was much greater, and sometimes startling.

In the punt it was used in accordance with wildfowling technique—with crutch and breechings—an ordinary shoulder-gun being carried as a cripple-stopper. Each charge for the big 'un was made up at home in empty 12-gauge cartridge cases, powder in one, shot in another, lightly closed by a removable felt wad.

Our punt-gunning yielded no large bags but, as many a better qualified judge has testified, afforded a rare quality of sheer sport—of a higher order, methinks, than any other gun-craft plied in our islands—except perhaps deerstalking—and, in its setting and accompaniments completing an extraordinarily strong appeal.

Long years after, the old 7-bore was produced by one of my brothers when we met again in India, as a little surprise. We were in a boat, when he generously conceded me first shot with the old dear—forgetting to mention that he had loaded up with "fine-grain Diamond."

The thwart took me just behind the ear.

ON THE FORTH

Not long after my seventeenth birthday I left school—far too early from the point of view of a boy who was just coming into his own, and already wore his VIII jersey, his XX cap (at a Scottish school famous for its "Rugger") and was bowling for the XI. But pensioners' widows with six children cannot be expected to take the purely athletic view; and, earmarked for Indian Service, my early exit from the nest was rightly judged to be the first consideration. Few schools had "Army Classes" then.

But now let me bring these early reminiscences to an end. My object in risking the reader's boredom was but to touch on the boyish days that often decide so much for after-life—the pebbles that turn the trickle at its source—and to conjecture, it may be in vain, on predisposition, predestination, heritage of a thousand generations, or simply environment.

And thus I started out on life. Individualistic rather than of herd instincts; knowing my way about any country, but not about a town. A Cro-Magnon rather than a Babelite. And, in a general sense, preferring nature to artifice, landscape to portraiture, places to people.

III

EARLY DAYS

I WAS still in my teens when I arrived in India, a second-lieutenant of eight months' standing, to join the first battalion of my regiment; and only fifteen years had elapsed since, clad in short frocks, I had left that country.

I could remember nothing of the East, but smells and tastes have a way of fixing themselves on the earliest memory, and there was familiarity in those that were now wafted about—cocoanut oil, cowdung fires, guava fruit, ghee, musk, and esprit-de-corps. Six years later, on the Sátpúras, I came across a peculiar little wild fruit called *sakhríya*, the appearance and taste of which I remembered at once although twenty-two years had passed since last I could have met with it.

It might be thought that Hindustani would come back quickly to one who had chattered it in childhood; but such was not my experience.

Landing in Bombay off the old troopship *Euphrates*, I shared a hotel room with a long friend. He must have kicked through his mosquito-netting and given the foe a long night's suck at fresh young blood, for, with the morning light, he called to me in some agitation. His feet were most horribly swollen, dead-white, and puffy, and we gazed in horror at a bright green insect, some four inches long, that sat ominously on the inside of his net and wore a look of grim responsibility. It was really nothing but a harmless giant grasshopper.

Not long had I risen and dressed when there entered a dignified vision of spotless white raiment, huge white *pagri*, shiny black face, and large, bare, prehensile toes. Prostrating itself, it then flew at my boots and began rapidly to unlace them! As I sat, blankly wondering how to interpret this oriental ceremony, the being handed me a letter in which the

Adjutant of my regiment informed me that he was sending me a servant—who might be useful, at any rate would see to it that nobody else robbed me.

"Master's very own servant, sah!" gravely greeted me as I finished reading.

Poor Mádré! Many a year did he unlace my boots—but not in the way meant by the humorous reader—even did he remain in my service after I married, a feat unusual for a bachelor's servant accustomed to a life of ease and not too close an auditing of bazar accounts.

A splendid cook he was, adept at preparing a six-course dinner under a tree in some remote jungle, then, having cleaned and dressed himself, serving it up in the grand manner. Being a Madrási, he spoke English "same like master."

"Clean collar got it, Madre?" I would shout. To which, diving headlong for the article, he would reply: "Seep's (cabin) trunk, there only catching, sah!"

He mothered me up to Kamptee in the Central Provinces, reporting himself at every stop with "Any order, sah?" and filling my compartment with tropical fruits, for which later he presented me with the first of his many "little accounts"; and finally delivered me solemnly to the Adjutant. I even knew this paragon, who took the deepest interest in my welfare, to hand me a dish at mess with the remark —*sotto voce* and eked out with an appreciative black finger— "That very good piece, sah!"

Newcomers to India usually find themselves for a time overcome by the most importunate sleepiness at the evening meal. This is rather a lengthy performance as one eats through the many small, innutritious, and would-be recherché dishes of the Indian "bobbarchy," or *chef-de-cuisine*, and the "old hand" watches with amusement the simultaneously nodding efforts to combat this powerful somnolence until the whole table of the newly-arrived is fast asleep.

Kampti happened to be an excellent centre for sport—big game, and pigsticking—but as I was there only six months, and kept pretty busy at my job, my opportunities were few.

Yet, no later than the fifth day after arrival in the gorgeous East I sallied forth, with another equally green subaltern, after the Indian antelope (blackbuck). It was a Thursday, the Indian mid-week holiday of those days, the dear old departed "Europe day"; and we started in the middle of the night, by train, getting out a few hours later at a wayside place where our native shikáris met us—old cantonment loafers who could talk a little "English."

Not otherwise a diarist, I still treasure a pile of old shikar notes—fourteen volumes of them!—and find they afford many a laugh, particularly the early and amusingly detailed records of the "griffin" newly come to the East—and to the old shikari a reminiscent sigh.

On that first day we set out before sunrise, wondering greatly at the Indian "false-dawn," that brilliant green illumination that ushers in the bird-chatter, the crow-cawing, the first shrieking of the green parrakeets, ere the tyrant sun bursts on the scene with those slanting, searching beams that got one nicely under the old-fashioned policeman-helmet, as one stood stiff on parade, felling some young soldier in the ranks with clatter of rifle and accoutrements, or, in the Indian Army, bringing a native officer—bearded like the pard—curly sword—magnificent salute—to report that sepoy so-and-so had got "chuckers."

We separated, each with his shikari, each followed by a *ringhi*, a light framework on wheels, drawn by a pair of diminutive trotting bullocks, to carry our lunch basket and any antelope we might get—a proceeding that certainly raised our hopes, even if it seemed to savour of too great expectations.

And thus we first fared into wide, flat, or very gently undulating plains, a huge country of rich, dry, friable black cotton soil, devoid of all fence. Luxuriant green crops of tall millet, waist-high cotton, low vetches and linseed made a patchwork of hues and alternated with fallow and faded yellow grass, blue-green prickly pear, belts of thorny acacias, and shady, rounded clumps of wild mango, tamarind, and the

ther larger countryside trees. To north and south the view nded in low hills, bluely distant. Elsewhere it receded to nfinity, " if not farther." Here and there we crossed shallow, andy, date-palm-fringed nullahs or watercourses, with dribbles nd pools of tepid water. Cross-country tracks yielded, at ne slightest disturbance, a choking powdery dust. Over all cloudless vault of deepest cobalt that turns to purplish-lack at high noon ; and, although it was the " cold-weather," sun and air considerably hotter than southern England in ne doggiest dog-days.

All was strange, outstanding, puzzlingly delightful, or ankly beastly. The great number, variety, vocality, and eneral tameness of birds—doves ; green parrots in screaming ights ; small, impudently alert grey-backed crows ; blue ys ; green-pigeon ; cattle-egrets ; *mainas* ; quail and par-idges now and then ; wheeling, screaming kites ; even ultures !

The casual way in which my ringhi trundled over growing ops ! The vehicle itself with its small, rude, disc wheels, s seatless hardness, its jumpy, white, bell-tinkling, diarrhœic ullocks ! The all but nude driver squatting on the hither nd of the cart-pole, the strange method of driving by means pushings and buffetings with elbows, bare feet, and hands, il-twistings, toe-ticklings in tenderest portions of bullock natomy, and all the while a running commentary of petu-ntly querulous remarks of the inner meaning and value of hich I was as yet unaware !

Then the mud-built villages of the plain—with here and ere the well-preserved walls of some *garhi*, or mud fort, relic Pindári days—so picturesque at a distance, so appallingly sanitary on closer acquaintance, their sole conservancy the n, where every eddy of dust is a contamination and an sult. The village street is clearly the village latrine : what this when the warm rains fall day and night ?

Festering litter and rags ; cruelly be-manged, ownerless riah dogs ; smells of peculiarly oleaginous foodstuffs ; acridity cowdung fires ; snotty children, their eyes rimmed with

firmly-seated flies ; greasy sweets and trickly sugarinesses piled and pawed over in open booths, and black with yet more flies.

Peeps into inner courtyards of a surprising cleanliness. Obvious evidence at stream and well that these inconsistent people bathe at least once daily.

Strange-looking temples, and, more rarely, in this preponderance of Hindus, a white mosque-dome. Then Hindu idols, idols in shrines, idols in the open, idols under sacred trees, idols of perplexing variety, from ludicrous Hanumán the monkey-god and the elephant-headed Ganpati to the mere pointed phallic stone—and all painted, at one time or another, in startlingly brilliant vermilion.

Of different kinds of Indian humanity we had a bewildering kaleidoscope in Bombay. Here is simplicity. The cultivator or *raiyat* of these plains is of nondescript physique, rather thin, rather black, naked save for loin-cloth, turban, and perhaps a pair of boat-like, stiff, clumping shoe-slippers on his huge, flat feet. His women, better-favoured perhaps, barefooted, glass-bangled, with picturesquely draped *sári* and a tiny flimsy corset for the breasts. The single-piece sari is wound loosely round the body, showing naked waist, legs bare below mid-thigh (thus going one better even than " Miss 1928 ") and the end of the drapery thrown coif-wise over the head, or, should she deem her beauty too provocative, drawn close round the face and held fast between young white teeth. The general impression is one of simplicity, grace, and modesty. These draperies, by the way, when dulled by washing from their original brilliancy of various blended colour, often display most artistic tints.

For the Indian woman fashions do not change. She has never known such monstrous incongruities as the bustle, tight-lacing stays, inhumanly-shaped skirts, sleeves, collars, and the ludicrous and extraordinarily inartistic varieties of hat and bonnet. To our own present-day reaction in favour of sanity and simplicity I do not refer, nor, on the other hand, to the frowsinesses of other Indian attire, of both sexes, that

increase as one travels northward—to the country *where water is cold* for some months of the year—nor yet to the dust- and filth-draggling skirts and ends of the all-but-eye-concealing *burka*. My remarks refer to the better-class Hindu peasantry of central and westerly parts of the peninsula ; and would-be critics can travel from Peshawar to Madras, Calcutta to Bombay, and judge for themselves.

These women's lives, they say, begin very early, are hard, and age soon : likewise those of the men. But by what standard are we judging ? The early living and ageing are climatic and natural ; by European standards their work is leisurely ; they are content, nay, happy. It was a solecist and a fool who coined the phrase " pathetic contentment."

Out in the country again, we consider these people fortunate. Born and bred to the heat—which, even in summer is not really great here, nothing like the Panjáb with its appalling night-temperatures. No slums. No biting cold and wet, or overcrowding. No " civilised " jostling of riches and poverty. Sufficiency of food ; even in a famine the Sarkár (Government) can ensure that, for the railway is near. And these, and others more or less like them except for slight local differences, form more than 90 per cent. of India's population. . . .

But now my shikari is pointing to a piece of open ground between fields. Half a dozen slim yellowish shapes, rather bigger than goats, and leggier, stand at gaze, a couple of hundred yards distant. They walk away, trot a little, then bound lightly, like rubber balls, high in air. Then they halt and stare. One or two nibble at the low crop at their feet, raising prick-eared heads again, watching us. They are graceful, hornless, yellow-brown, with a pale flank-stripe and pure white chest and underparts. We go on, and the does disappear, leaping, all four feet seeming to strike the ground simultaneously, stiffly, all tucked up under the body when they rise in air.

This species of antelope lives in close daily intimacy with native man and his ways, and is, consequently, a specialised

and discerning creature, very well aware, as one soon discovers, of what is what, adept at self-preservation, wild as hawks if suspicion be roused, and fleeter than any greyhound.

Another half-mile, and another lot of does—about fifteen this time—wandering slowly over fallow, and, following them, a buck.! He is black or dark brownish-black where they are yellow, brilliantly white elsewhere, and has V-shaped, shallowly-spiral horns about 18 to 20 inches long. He canters lazily after the does, nose in air, horns laid gracefully back. He halts, gazes, culls a toothful morsel, horns a fly from his shining flank, scratches his chin with a hind foot, walks stiltedly about, tail over back, nose raised in arrogance as he affects to shepherd his wayward ladies. A proud and lovely creature.

I glance inquiringly at my shikari. Yes. This is a warrantable buck.

I had already devoured many books on Indian game and thought that I had learned up something about " that common animal the blackbuck " ; so I " down-charged " my dusky henchman and started off " on my own." It took me about an hour of astonishingly sweaty endeavour to get within long shot, during which I must have crawled, walked, and run about two miles . . . and then I missed !

Red-faced and somewhat riled, I rose, and signalled up my man. The ringhi followed him, and we trudged doggedly on. This common blackbuck shooting was not quite so easy as it looked !

After much diligent tramping and two more misses in the shimmer of a now blazing sun, I at last landed a *gólee*, or rifle-ball, on a decent and fair-minded buck. But he changed his mind, and, making off at a high rate of speed, disappeared afar into a patch of dense *jawári*, or millet, 6 to 7 feet in height. Following hot-foot, and hot everything else, and running round, I found that luckily it was a detached plot of about half an acre, outlier to a very large field—a perfect sea—of this grain, and that a field-watcher's machan, or raised platform of poles, etc., stood near their junction. Clambering on to this rickety erection I gesticulated silently and wildly to

my shikari, and he had the sense to get the ringhi-driver and beat the patch towards me.

There was a shout, a crash in the tall grain, a rush past my lighthouse tower, a lucky snap, and I was delightedly examining and admiring my first blackbuck.

I fluked another while working towards the rendezvous where my friend and I had arranged to meet and have lunch, and, crossing a small shallow river, found a splendid big mango tree with deep, delightful shade. India is a land of sharp contrasts. What a joy to get out of that sun, remove one's large, stiff, oppressive *sola tópi*, " take an observation " with the big felt-covered waterbottle, have some water poured over one's head and handkerchief, and stretch out on the clean, dry ground below the mango, comfortably tired and not empty-handed !

But see ! Dusky figures approach, bearing a native string-bedstead, or *chárpai* (four-feet), from the village, and with friendly smiles set it down before me. Ah ! I can as yet only grunt and smile my thanks, for, although in my *Forbes* there are long-winded phrases expressive of thankfulness, I have already discovered that there is no simple, short, Hindustani word for " thanks." Stay ! My first blackbuck, he must go with me, proud and complete as possible, to Cantonments ; but the other can be skinned now and here, and the villagers are as welcome to the meat as I to their hospitality.

My friend is late, and the shikari says that there are green-pigeon in a tree over there, copies their charming low warbling whistle. I seize my hat and gun.

On another occasion a companion and I basely yielded to the blandishments of a villager that we should deceive and destroy a certain long-horned and very shy buck by means of a bullock-cart. Taking our uncomfortable squats, we were driven towards the buck and surprised to find that he took little notice of our murderously close approach. We had made a silly arrangement to fire simultaneously, a sort of " broad-side," and, coming very near, loosed off as one man.

drowned many a fine fellow. He put up a desperate struggle for life, during which he bawled for help to some natives who sat and watched him from the bank.

Not the slightest notice was taken of his dire extremity. He may have used "shall" instead of "will"; his audience may just have dined; or been opium-sodden; or considered it a good joke; or, native-like, they may simply have disliked to be mixed up in any old bother. Anyway, they just sat.

Cases have occurred—which I can corroborate—when at the last, incapable of even one more kick, consciousness almost gone, the weed-wrapped legs, sinking down, *touch bottom*! Thus, luckily, with Mr. Atkins.

Finally attaining dry land, he slowly revived; as also did a large and righteous indignation. He dressed deliberately, all but his belt, a rich and rare article, cunningly and lavishly wrought with metallic *appliqué*. This, first spitting carefully in his palm, he took in his honest right hand. Then, closely approaching the still squatted natives, he addressed them with some emotion:

"'Ere! Ye dekkoes me in the peeny-ka-pawny!"

"Ye 'ears me bóló!"

"And . . . (tragic pause) ye koochperwarnies on yer peechies!"

"So now (whack!) I'm going to (whack, whack!) marrow ye!"[1]

No sport is improved by making its conditions easier or by taking an unfair advantage; so even blackbuck shooting will always provide plenty of exercise and endeavour when carried out on foot, as in our griffin-hood, and without trading on the antelope's few weak points. Later we were to find that the most sporting of all methods is to ride across country, with a mounted attendant and followed by a good trotting camel,

[1] *Dekho* . . . . Imperative of *dekhna*, to look, see.
Píné ka páni . . . Drinking-water.
Bóló . . . . Imperative of *bolna*, to speak, say.
Kúchh parwa nahin . . No matter, never mind!
Píché . . . . Behind (preposition).
Máró . . . . Imperative of *márna*, to strike.

carrying food and drink, and on which the game can be loaded. Riding widely spread out, a large extent of country can be covered and then only the very best buck picked out and stalked. Saddle and spear also enable one to dispose of a wounded buck quickly and sportingly.

At Kamptee were quartered Indian as well as British troops and soon I met them, at a "field day," when my regiment was halted on the road and a native infantry battalion came past. By that time the long-service British soldier, the seasoned Indian veteran, had disappeared, and my regiment was mostly very young and unacclimatised; whereas the sepoy was still a long-service man. So my youthful mind was impressed by the mature, bearded appearance of those dusky legionaries. And very well turned out they were; the service clothing of the Indian Army being made and fitted under regimental arrangements, with results very different from the general skimpy tightness of the department that affected to clothe Thomas Atkins. The turban, or pagri, too, that most fortunate adaptation of the East, transforms the appearance of any wearer. Those sepoys also seemed and smelt cleanly.

Aspiring to nobler game than blackbuck, I spent a week-end in the nearest bit of hill-jungle that my shikari recommended, but shot only a four-horned antelope, though I saw a small sambar and a spotted deer or two. In my ignorance I had a bad time with spear-grass, which quickly taught me what sort of clothing to avoid—especially putties. Also, I drank some unboiled water, which promptly inflicted its penalty of dysentery and put me out of action for some weeks.

Later, on the eve of pushing off on a rather more ambitious shoot, I received orders to proceed to Satára, as a probationer for the Indian Army. That was a delightful little civil and military station, near Poona, in the southern Marátha country, with a pleasant climate and surroundings, but, except for some small game, of little use to a keen shikari. By going rather far afield, westward, one could visit the dense hilly jungles of the Western Ghâts and the Koyna Valley. There, during my fifteen months of Satara, I shot a small sámbar

and saw some bison and a sloth-bear; but here, again, I was busily employed in learning my work, particularly in acquiring the language, in which, for admittance to the Indian Army, two examinations had to be passed, in Úrdú and Dévanágri.

There was a Crœsus-like feeling on first drawing one's Indian pay and allowances; on which a subaltern could live comfortably, keep a couple of ponies, and forget those melancholy productions of the British regimental paymaster with their inevitable "red-ink-entry" that showed subalterns in considerable monthly debit after meeting their mess bills and subscriptions.

At Satara I shared a bungalow with a friend who was keen on snakes, which he used to buy from "charmers." Those little pets he used to let loose in our joint sitting-room, secure in the knowledge that their poison-fangs had been removed on capture—jerked out by means of a pad of cloth into which the charmer had induced them to strike and embed their teeth. The smell of the reptiles was most objectionable, and I was delighted when, at last, one of the cobras bit my friend—who, in spite of his professed indifference, lost no time in scooting to the doctor's house.

The Indian Army was then armed with the old ·577 bore Snider rifle, though on the eve of being rearmed with the ·450 Martini-Henry—both firing black powder. The Snider was a very effective and sweet-shooting old weapon, with nothing like the recoil of its supplanter. Its soft lead bullet had an entirely-enclosed hollow head, and an open hollow base into which fitted an earthenware plug (the latter causing the bullet to expand into the grooves) and woe betide recipients of that highly expansive bullet. The hinged breech-block system of the Snider was wonderfully simple and effective, originally invented for the conversion of existing muzzle-loaders to breech-loading.

The regiment to which I was attached temporarily was one of the Bombay Light Infantry, mostly Maráthas, and the only one that I served with. I must say that their native officers, as a body, were quite the best of all that I subsequently knew or

had the opportunity of observing during thirty-one years, during ten of which I was employed on the general staff, with its facilities for comparative observation.

There used to be a lot of differentiation in the Indian Army —which may be summed up as north *v.* south—with regard to the merits of the many different races enlisted ; but 1914–18 altered some of those too parochial ideas. Anyway, I understand that the Marathas maintained a fine reputation.

By the time I got to India all of my family and their friends had left the country, so I had no personal guidance in making a choice of any particular Indian unit as a permanency. My mother counselled me to apply for a regiment permanently situated in the Himalayas—" where the climate is better." But I had other ideas, which were confirmed by friends who had already made their choice, and sent me glowing accounts of life and sport in the Hyderabad Contingent. This unit of the I.A., like the Central India Horse, the Punjab Frontier Force, etc., was a localised one, cantoned in the Hyderabad Deccan, and consisted of four cavalry regiments, four field batteries, and six infantry battalions. I sent in my application and in course of time was posted to the 4th Infantry, joining them at Raichúr in the great plains of the Kistna-Túngabhadra Doáb.

That is typical, palm-tree India, an excellent country for duck and snipe, with very good mahseer fishing in the Kistna. About three months after I joined the regiment—my real Indian home—we started off on a long march " on relief," making for Aurangabad, our new station. We marched first north-east to Hyderabad and Secunderabad, the latter the largest military station in India, stretching over close on eleven miles of country. Then north-west via Jálna to our destination —a 450-mile tramp—taking part *en route* in a large concentration of troops for manœuvres near the ancient stronghold of Bídar.

The dominions of the Nizam of Hyderabad—the biggest Indian Native State—were, and are famous for big game, chiefly carnivora ; providing also vast scope for the shot-

gun. That is also an exceedingly interesting country from an archæological and historical standpoint, full of well-preserved relics of the days of the great Moghal Emperors of India, in that respect second only to the region round Delhi, and abounding in those huge Deccan forts of solid masonry or great granite blocks, enclosed by miles of lofty concentric battlemented walls, and crowned by the usual Brobdingnagian cannon. To this day the Nizam's country is known as the Moghlai, or land of the Moghals.

It was at Raichur that I made my fortunate choice of a "batman," or regimental orderly, and it was natural that shikar qualifications should decide the matter—in which I was helped by the Adjutant, a keen and experienced shikari. My attention had early been drawn to the sturdy and independent Mohammedan sepoy, scion of a good up-country family of Pathán descent that traced back to Akbar's times. The only question was whether he would care for the post—one which he had not yet accepted.

Thus began the long association of Abbás Khan and myself, which was to last for the whole of my Indian service and continue even after both of us had taken our pensions. May the old fellow long continue to go strong, as he does still, on the good land that latterly we were able to substitute for his original patrimony.

In the Raichur country, by the way, were to be found peculiar little quagmires called *daldal*. Unusually situated, on high ground, in that hard, bare, red soil, one would notice a curious, slight raising and wrinkling of the surface, a few inches in height, that looked as if a gigantic plate of very liquid porridge had been turned out there. These daldal are quite small, seldom over six feet in diameter, but of unknown bottom, and caused by very deep springs. An elephant belonging to a local Rája got its forelegs into one and eventually perished in that position, in spite of all efforts to extricate it.

The Nizam's dominions lie largely in the granite country. This is overlaid, particularly in the west and north, by horizontal flows of the great Deccan cap of black basalt, or "amyg-

daloidal trap," which forms the higher hilly tracts. The whole character of the country and crops, and indeed of the inhabitants, alters with the geology. In the granitic soil the slightest embankment will bind and hold back water. Consequently that country is peppered all over with thousands of " tanks " for irrigation purposes, and rice is the staple crop. A few of these tanks are of great size, lakes really, but the average is from five to ten acres. Maps of this country have a ridiculous, pock-marked appearance, especially if the tanks have been coloured. This is *the* snipe and duck country, all rice and date-palms, peopled by toddy-drawing Telugús, and displaying, here and there, tor-like eminences of huge, piled, poised rock-masses, the home of leopards, bears, and hyænas.

The trap regions are quite different, with their flat-topped, scrubby hills of porous rock, plains of friable black or red soil, millet and cotton crops, and, masonry being necessary for embankments, practically no tanks at all ; while the inhabitants are mostly Kúnbis of the bastard-Marátha type.

To me that long march was unalloyed joy. Pleasant companions, fresh interests and experiences daily, any amount of sport.

Our Colonel was one of the old-fashioned kind ; and réveillé sounded seldom later than 4 a.m., followed by a terrific noise on drums and fifes, known as " Old Father Toozelums," which instantly roused the most hardened sleeper. Down came the tents, along came the transport, down went a very early breakfast, and by five at latest the battalion was off, leaving but a few smouldering fires, a few prowling " pi," or pariah dogs, and the Quartermaster with his sanitary staff to tidy up. Until dawn, except of course during the later phases of the moon, the regimental *masálchis* lighted our way, each with his *mashál*—a bundle of rags on an iron cresset, replenished with oil from a huge oil-can at intervals, and held flaring aloft.

The memory of it all strongly persists. The long, dim column of marching sepoys. The looming figures of the mounted officers. The flaring torches. And the band banging away. . . .

Extraordinarily cold those hours before the dawn could be; especially when the road dipped down into some palm-fringed hollow where the mist rose off the rice-fields.

Then the glory of the Indian sunrise over low jungly hills or through great groves of drooping date-palms—that delightful hour before the sun exerts full power. Servants despatched ahead would have half-way coffee and tea awaiting us on the roadside.

Jack Sepoy is a wonderful mover, his long legs soon wear down the miles, so we would be in our next camp by about ten o'clock. Keen shots were off in various directions, and the mess would be amply provided with game of many kinds. The perennial "Hot-pot," skilfully managed by our gourmets, was an institution not easily forgotten.

For the first 140 miles we followed the main Madras-Hyderabad road, and for several marches passed through a continuous jungle of custard-apple, or *Sita-phal*, sacred to the goddess consort of Rám. This beautiful and delicious fruit, *anona reticulata*, distantly and outwardly resembling a large globe artichoke, grows on a straggly, eight-foot bush, and people who have never plucked it straight from the tree, ice-cold at early morn, simply do not know it. We used to carry spoons in our breast-pockets; and at a halt the whole regiment would leave the road as one man. No need to go farther than a few steps, for the nearest bush was hung with dozens of the soft ripe fruit. It was said that some philanthropic noble of Hyderabad had planted a few alongside the road, long ago; and now they cover the whole country. There is a native idea that many sita-phal induce malaria

Sometimes one or two of us would get leave to shoot our way to the next camp; on which occasions there would be the added joy of hearing "Old Toozelums" unmoved, dropping off with a lazy grin for another delightful nap, as the regiment went off in the dark! Then, rising leisurely to a comfortable late breakfast served by our personal "boys," we would despatch our camp equipage on transport left for us by an indulgent member of the regimental staff, and have

DAWN ON THE TANK

THE PICK-UP

a day in the country, skimming the cream off the best shooting-grounds along the route.

Oh! those tanks! To sneak up quietly soon after dawn and note their undisturbed, almost virgin shores and shallows simply crawling with duck and teal! And, later, with one's first step in the soaked and squidgy ground below the "bund," or embankment, to start the *sssscape*! of large numbers of fat snipe!

The big duck down there was the spot-bill. No mallard so far south. But most of the other duck and teal were well represented, particularly pochard, widgeon, and pintail. An interesting and exceedingly active little fellow, travelling at great speed round and round in small bunches, was the cotton-teal; actually a pigmy goose, and rather useless to kill except in complete dearth of the better duck.

The best couple of hours I ever had in the country south of Hyderabad was, curiously enough, in low scattered bush jungle. It was very sultry, and after shooting a few snipe in their normal haunts I noticed others settling among the bushes on rising ground. Following them up, the scrub was found to be alive with birds. The shooting was quick and difficult, but the birds sat very tight in the shade and had to rise high to clear the bushes. It was only a thirty-four couple day, but I do not remember a more enjoyable snipe-shoot.

The surest usual find for snipe in that country was in ground that had recently borne a crop of millet. When this is reaped, the large root and about nine inches of stalk are left in the dry ground. Irrigation is then let in to rot and soften the ground for further tillage. This produces conditions quite irresistible by long-bills. There was always a definite, peculiar smell about those rich bits of ground that to this day is indissolubly connected in my mind with large numbers of snipe.

Rice-fields, too, hold birds splendidly; but they must be just "right," i.e. neither too wet nor too dry.

In India snipe are entirely migrant. But, once arrived in those southern and central parts of the peninsula, they settle down for the whole of the cold weather and are soon

deliciously fat. This, the hot sun, and their numbers, make for big bags.

Snakes are, of course, very common in snipe ground, but fortunately one seldom encounters them, there or elsewhere. The only really close squeak I had with a snake was when, stooping to pick up a snipe, I put my hand within a few inches of the expanded hood of a rather annoyed or interested cobra on top of which the bird had fallen.

In shooting tanks, duck often fall far out in deep water. I have already indicated what is likely to happen to thoughtless young men who go for a swim in such treacherous waters. It is when one turns, and the legs sink, that the weeds get their deadly hold. The only chance then is to float on the back and use hands only, propeller-wise, right on the surface. Judging from the number of double fatalities in tanks—including would-be rescuer—once one becomes entangled, escape borders on the miraculous. So, unless you carry a collapsible boat, can get a dug-out, improvise floats, or a rope round the swimmer, let the bird go. British dogs—especially sporting dogs, don't do very well in the plains of India: besides, the weeds may get them too.

On one occasion, finding some nice dry poles lying handy, I launched two of them, and, getting one under each armpit, set out to retrieve my duck. Out in deep water, my eye caught a slight movement, and behold! a whole family of scorpions crawling along the top of one of the half-submerged timbers!

While mentioning this part of India I may note that some years later I visited an extraordinary piece of country lying along the river Kistna, not far below its junction with the Túngabhadra. On the quarter-inch map this area, which is about fifty miles long by fifteen wide, is shown as a blank, marked "impenetrable and unsurveyed." That of course attracted me at once, and without further ado I made a bee-line for it, with two companions. At a place named Karnúl we embarked in baskets, *tókra*. These extraordinary craft are very large, bamboo-framed, leather-covered coracles. I once saw them used to ferry a battery of field-guns across this

BELOW THE 'BUND'

river. The tokra was simply brought to the hard, shelving shore, and the gun or limber was man-handled straight into it. The coracle tipped up slightly, the pliable gunnel bent under the wheels, and rose again when they had passed. There was no manœuvring or bother ; and the tokra, drawing about a foot of water under its heavy load, floated off without fuss ! On the far shore the simple process was reversed. The only extra precaution was that two wide planks were laid in the tokra for the wheels to rest on.

The frames of the coracles are of latticed bamboo, with strong thick rims, and are fitted into beautifully-sewn, pliable buffalo-hides, shaped like shallow finger-bowls, and about ten feet in diameter. Two men kneel by the gunnel and paddle alternately two strokes right and two left.

We floated down to the "impenetrable and unsurveyed" country in a couple of these tokras, our kit and selves in one, servants and kitchen in the other. Portaging to avoid some dangerous rapids, we dropped down-stream very pleasantly. At meal times it was amusing to watch the tokras approach each other, each come spinning sedately, touch awhile for a dish to be handed across, then separate, spinning in the opposite direction. Shooting some minor rapids—with much too big waves, we thought—was hair-raising enough, when suddenly all our boatmen started yelling at once, paddling frantically for the shore. A rock had scraped one of the heavily-laden saucers. Quickly it was beached, emptied, and turned upside down. The damaged area was cut clean out, a fresh piece of wetted hide skilfully sewn on as a patch, and within ten minutes we were off again.

At the end of our voyage we left the river, and paid off the coracle-men. We felt sorry for the crews, visualising their hard hike upstream, until we saw one of their number return from the nearest village with a cart and bullocks—on which the basket-work was wrenched out and thrown away, the precious leathers were carefully folded up and placed in the cart, the crews squatted on top of them, and all departed comfortably homeward.

The military potentialities of these tokras, with their great buoyancy, simplicity, cheapness, and handiness, are worth consideration.

We soon discovered that the cartographer's remarks were founded on fact. His no-man's-land was—in pre-flying days—quite impenetrable. It was a region of nothing but piled and balanced boulders, granitic nodules varying in size from that of a football to a large cottage. The average might have been 15 feet in diameter. Only birds could penetrate that waste. Even monkeys are defeated by the overhang of the great stones. We learned that on the north side of this piece of country there are a few tortuous paths leading a short way into some inner mazes that occasionally hold a tiger or leopard, and are known only to the descendants of the dacoits who once used them. But our time did not permit of going there.

To continue our march towards Aurangabad—we passed out of the tank country, and duck and snipe were replaced by antelopes, gazelles, partridges, sandgrouse, hares, pigeons, demoiselle cranes, and a few great bustard. There were a good many wolves ; and a few leopards. Illustrative of the fact that vultures find their food by sight alone (at least so I hoped), when stalking a buck one day I happened to lie prone for a long time, when I heard the loud rush of descending pinions and two of the ugly brutes alighted close by and cocked their scabby eyes at me.

Talking of corpses reminds me that just before arriving at one of our camping grounds the body of a native merchant was found hanging from the branch of a tree. It appeared that on his way home from a fair he had been waylaid by dacoits, who had inflicted on him a particularly cruel and oriental torture which need not be particularised and from which death must have been a happy release. It is interesting to note that the scene of Meadows Taylor's gruesome book, *The Last of the Thugs*, is laid chiefly in Hyderabad territory, near Ellichpur.

At Jalna, once a large military centre, we had a great storm with hailstones as large as pigeons' eggs ; and next morning

I found a number of birds lying dead—including that wily bird the Indian grey-backed crow, which seems remarkable.

Near Jalna is the famous battle-field of Assaye, where Wellington "struck and won" in 1803, decisively defeating the Maratha confederacy.

At Aurangabad I spent the greater part of three years. In those days it lay sixty miles from the railway, but otherwise, as India goes, was a fairly accessible place, not far from Bombay. There was much scrubby hill country, besides plains, close by, but not much game. Leopards and gazelles a few, plenty of blackbuck within a day's ride, nílgae, and four-horned antelope in the flat-topped hills, while of small game a fair day's bag to one gun would be about fifteen to twenty head—duck, snipe, partridges (greys, and painted), quail, hares, and sandgrouse. Bustard and florikan a few.

In order to circumvent a fine and particularly wary buck I caused the figure of a bullock to be made by local experts in the manufacture of the papier-mâché demons, etc., displayed during the Hindu festival of *Rám-lila*. In painfully bent attitudes I supplied the forelegs and my orderly the hind. But there was something wrong; for no sooner did we top a rise than every antelope within sight made desperately for the horizon.

Judging from the *Oriental Sporting Magazine* of nearly a hundred years before, this part of the Deccan and the adjoining province of Khandésh must have suffered a remarkable diminution of big game—probably due to the opening up and cultivation of their fertile plains of black cotton soil: for, only three generations ago, it seems to have been a great country, especially for tigers. I always had my eye on the far western Satpuras in the north of Khandesh, but never managed to go there.

At Aurangabad, for the first and only time, I took part in carted leopard spearing. The beast was caught in the hills in a magnified mouse-trap baited with a goat. The trap was then placed on a bullock-cart and conveyed to the brigade parade-ground. There the leopard was released, when a

crowd of "spears" galloped down on him and one good thrust ended the affair. It was no sport at all, and was soon given up. On one occasion the "dead" leopard, surrounded by dismounted riders, was being photographed by a certain humorist. He had the old-fashioned black velvet cloth over his head and was screwing handles and things, with some of his tiresome jests, when the leopard rose and made a spasmodic rush. This was observed on his ground-glass by the operator, who forthwith hurled the camera to blazes, and, tearing the black cloth from his bald head, did the sprint of his life across the plain.

To ride a leopard that may turn up when one is pigsticking is, of course, a different affair. He is on his own ground, and has then been known to turn the tables on his hunters. But he seldom gives a sporting run, crouches or is easily overhauled, loses his head, and is very easily killed with the spear.

Reverting to the leopard-trap, a very similar cage is depicted in the magnificent Assyrian bas-reliefs, displayed in the British Museum, in which the Emperor Asshur-bani-pal is shown hunting carted lions with bow and arrow, nearly 2,600 years ago!

On the Roza plateau, above the hill scarps in which are situated the famous rock-hewn caves of Ellóra, fourteen miles from Aurangabad, we had a rest-house among some pleasant shooting-grounds, including a few tanks. In this neighbourhood is Daulatabad (City of Wealth), the ancient Hindu stronghold of Déogiri (Hill of the Gods), a truly wonderful old fortress with three immense outer circumvallations. The inner fort, originally a conical hill of solid basalt rising about 600 feet from the plain, has been scarped sheer all round into the semblance of a gigantic wedding-cake, with a huge ditch below the scarp. After passing the drawbridge, the approach to the citadel is by a staircased tunnel, cut, like all the rest of that stupendous feat, through the solid rock. Just before this tunnel emerges on to the slopes above the great scarp it is guarded by a heavy hinged iron grid, on which, when let down, a bonfire could be lighted.

I was employed to make a survey and report on this astounding monument of human ingenuity and labour (the latter forced, of course); and, having spent three weeks at the work, and in digging out its recorded history, I remember suggesting that this place was the eighth wonder of the world.

Muhammad Tughlak, one of the great Emperors of Delhi, a potentate of more ideas than wit, was so infatuated with Deogiri, which on conquest he renamed Daulatabad, that he determined to establish there the capital of his Empire. For that purpose he caused the whole of the population of Delhi to be driven, cattle-like, across India towards the Eldorado of his dreams. Few reached it alive. It was either this monarch or one of the Great Moghals who established between Daulatabad and Delhi a chain of "drum posts," by means of which the uprisings and lyings down of the Lord of the Earth could be signalled from capital to capital.

It is when contemplating these things that the appalling decayedness of India strikes the mind with such overwhelming force, while the eye turns to the almost incredible evidence before it—the miserable mud hovels and squalor that now encrust, like a blight, the outskirts of those impressive remains of a magnificent past.

The native city of Aurangabad and its surroundings are full of picturesque remains of the old Moghal days. A very fair copy of the Táj Mahál lies west of the town. On its northern side is a beautiful lotus-covered tank overlooked by a *báradari*, a pillared roof-verandah. The locality was well watered by an ancient system of aqueducts, and, in its rice-fields and low-lying moist ground, we had many a pleasant little shoot with the longbills, grey partridge, and quail.

In the Ellóra hills, while shooting one of the tanks, a cow-herd boy came blubbering along to say that a leopard had just killed one of the cows in his charge. I had only my shot-gun and number eights. However, my orderly managed to get a couple of fired Martini-Henry bullets from a Mussalmán shrine in the neighbourhood (!), and with these and a native hatchet I contrived to fashion a few rude slugs. These

I loaded into a couple of my snipe cartridges, with some of the small shot packed round them to get the right weight.

Ascending the hill, we found that the kill had taken place on the crest of a ridge, with a steep, jungly declivity beyond.

On making his unpleasant discovery—the leopard having sneaked off on his approach—the boy had cut and piled some thorn-bushes on the carcase. Those we found, but the cow was gone!

With silent stealth my orderly and I traced the drag, and presently, under some bushes below the edge of the fall, caught sight of the gory, half-eaten perineum of the victim. Knowing that her murderer would not be far away after a heavy meal, we continued our slow, creeping investigations. Suddenly my man pointed, and I saw the spotted hide. The brute was only seven paces away, stretched out, fast asleep!

As I waited for a clear shot at some vital spot, the gorged leopard slowly raised its head and regarded me blandly, in obvious perplexity. I fired at the eyes and stepped quickly aside, ready for a rush. There was dead silence. Reloading, and approaching from another direction, I found the creature in the same lying posture, but stone dead, with two slug-holes in its forehead.

This little episode sounds easy. And it was. An instance of that pure luck that (*cæteris paribus*) is about 50 per cent. of shikar; all the circumstances combining, for once in a way, in my favour, and, at a stroke, vouchsafing reward for fruitless endeavour of the past, and spur to future effort. For my experience is, with regard to the wily panther, that success to failures averages as one to five.

It was on this day that Abbas Khan propounded a little ballistic theory of his very own. He had lagged behind the line, and, on my swinging quickly to a back-flying snipe, a few pellets of No. 8 tickled up his gaiters. On expressing my concern and pointing out the reason for the error he solemnly replied:

"*Hazúr, Kuchh fikar nahin!* Your honour! Do not distress yourself! I was a long way off, and by the time the shot

reached me it was cold. Had I been nearer, the shot might have been hot; in which case, Allah permitting, I should undoubtedly have received a wound."

I had now been in India five years, and, although I had shot some variety of her smaller animals, had not yet had an opportunity of trying for big game. Except when fortunately located—for there are large tracts devoid of game worth the name—that involves a distant expedition, especially for buffalo, bison, tigers, the larger cervidæ, and bears. The consequent expense makes a serious inroad on a penniless subaltern's means. Longish leave is also required. Twice had I prepared such a trip; but each time, on the eve of departure, had unluckily happened to meet the Adjutant, who regretted to inform me that my leave was postponed as I was to proceed to a course of instruction in musketry, signalling, or other speciality.

Some people seem to be under the impression that to shoot big game all that the cruel blood-sportsman has to do is to "seize his gun and plunge into the forest." I have even met "shooting men" at home with somewhat similar views, founded no doubt on the popular ideas promulgated by Pagett, M.P., and his kidney, who have been provided with everything, down to a plush-lined "howdah" and a loaded rifle, and, later on, found themselves presented with a tiger-skin.

But that is not the British subaltern's way—nor, I hope, that of many colonels—for which there are many quite different essentials. Fitness is one; ability to run his own shoot, cope physically and constitutionally with climate and conditions that are not for the pampered; good management and equipment; close knowledge of the language, customs, prejudices and peculiarities of those important people the natives, with whom he must establish the friendly relations necessary to success; hard work. And there are many preliminaries. For instance, unless your shoot is "wangled," short-circuited by some wire-pulling means, and its value thereby largely discredited, you will at first have to go through a tiresome but

educative process of trial and error in finding good shooting-grounds. Eyes and ears must be patiently used and failures faced before you at last arrive in the promised land.

Finally, there is that simple thing—luck. Failing it, little will other essentials avail you. Even Napoleon had something to say on the subject. Yet the unluckiest of mortals can force occasional triumphs that are worth all the easy favours of fortune put together. The "lucky man" is to be pitied.

Most game animals of peninsular India are nocturnal in habit, and few of them are found on the move long after dawn or much before nightfall. This means habitual early rising for the shikari, and often a long hike in the dark, or a bivouac in the jungle in order to be on his ground by the first tinge of the false-dawn. A compensating day sleep is not so easy as it may seem, for hot winds and day temperatures of well over 100° are met with even in the jungle in the hot season, and there is the intense light to be shut out. Once during my seven jungle years I tried the experiment of turning night into day and vice versa, spending the whole of the moonlight night in the jungle, and sleeping from about 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Although at the time putting up in a cool, shady, thatched hut, I found that I was increasingly unable to sleep sufficiently during day or keep wide awake at night. I daresay, however, that perseverance—or necessity—would enable one to adapt mind and body to the changed conditions.

Some of the best big game country is distinctly unhealthy, and specialises in malignant forms of malaria.

Enough, however, of difficulties. To the enthusiast they are only part of the game, and need not loom large. But we are not going to let an ignoramus get away with the idea that there is "not much in this big game business," just because he cannot read between the lines or see that, from the nature of things, sporting reminiscences dwell on the successes rather than on the disappointments and the high percentage of blank days.

It should be remembered, particularly by those who, like "myself when young," may be searching books of this sort

for information, that circumstances alter cases and that my times and location may have afforded more opportunity to "lone hand" shikaris of ferreting out good country for themselves. But, even then, I soon found that it was best to go really far afield whenever I got sufficiently long leave. The more easily accessible shooting-grounds were already being overdone.

For various reasons, during my latter years in India, less sport generally was being sought. To that must be added the significant fact that all of the Indian sporting newspapers —and there were three or four of them once—ceased publication some years ago; and that not as a result of the War. In discussing this with an experienced editor, he remarked:

"Our first thought in India was of a pony and a gun. The young man there to-day thinks of nothing but a motor-bike and a tennis-racquet."

There is something in this, undoubtedly; yet the wheel travelling full circle, the new kind finding the old ways good. . . . *Resurgat!* My sympathies lying wholeheartedly with the sporting youngster who has to plough his own furrow, I hope, ere writing "finis" to my musings, to have provided him with some general information as to all shooting-grounds known to me personally or by repute. The rest is up to him. He need not thank me. I doubt that many of him would have got it while I owed it only to myself and contemporaries—who had to work for our information—and he has it now only because we have done with it and I have come to feel strongly that it is high time that all who serve in India should have equal facilities of sharing in the sport the country provides. Remembering the terse wisdom of *Field Service Regulations, Part I, Operations*, which is as valuable a guide to ordinary life as to soldiering, I shall at least have provided him with the prime essential to sound action.

At last my real big game days began to dawn. Circumstances led to my taking "general" leave, not "privilege," although the latter bears the larger pay. I thus got away in the latter part of the cold weather, i.e. during the drill-

season, and was enabled to prolong my shikar opportunities over the subsequent hot weather. I went to the southern Sátpúras, to which I had long been greatly attracted by reading that splendid book, Forsyth's *Highlands of Central India*, and made my headquarters at Chikalda, a small hot-weather resort situate on the highest range of those flat-topped hills at about 3,700 feet above the sea.

For those and my many other delightful days and nights in that region let us turn to my next chapter of musings; for, two years later, my regiment moved to Ellichpur, which lies close to the foot of those hills.

It was not until considerably later that I discovered that I had been to Chikalda before; that at four years of age I had spent a hot-weather there! Strange indeed that fate should lead the jungle-born back to the old jungles.

I am sorry to leave Aurangabad without further notice, for it was a pleasant, sociable station, with a fairly good climate and surroundings. It was entirely a "Contingent" station then, with a cavalry regiment, a field-battery, and an infantry battalion. We had a most comfortable combined mess, and there were also a few civilian officials in the place.

At Aurangabad a cavalry subaltern joined me in a course of Indian wrestling—which afforded us our fill of exercise and considerable amusement. The *pahlwán*, or native wrestler, is a clever fellow, exceedingly nimble of mind as well as of body. A high-caste native officer of my regiment was our instructor, and, although not a big man, threw us about with scientific ease. Indian wrestling is a high art, assiduously and widely cultivated for thousands of years. It is of the catch-as-catch can style, conducted in an *akhára*, or sort of shallow pit filled with soft dry soil or sand, round which the pair, mother-naked save for one most exiguous and tightly adjusted "garment," stalk and manœuvre with much muscle-slapping and posturing until one or the other gets a proper grip. Unfortunately, as victory demands that both your opponent's shoulder-blades must touch ground simultaneously, there is often too much "ground work," one man lying face

downwards in the dust while the other sits on his back, trying to turn him over.

Regarding the many deadly *pénch*, or strangle-or-bone-breaking holds that *can* be employed, or of the fatal result of some of them, I will not particularise. These were set forth, about 1898, in an extraordinarily good series of (magazine ?) stories entitled *In the Lines*, dealing with the murderous family feuds of some of our Indian soldiers other than Pathans.

An Indian wrestling-match can be almost too exciting; sometimes ending in a kind of Donnybrook Fair among spectators of antagonistic interests—or, worse still, of differing religions. Even at small and friendly contests, inter-regimental or otherwise, the stewards are careful to provide against trouble; and it is common to see the victor, the instant after touching down his opponent's shoulders, rush for a waiting knot of his friends—which forthwith encloses its champion safe from spiteful harms.

During many years' observation of Indians generally I have always marvelled at the paradox of a constitutionally lethargic people practising so largely an art that calls for such concentrated energy of mind and body.

The typical pahlwan is a very gross-looking person, encased in fat and trained on butters, milks, and sugars: but a few of the best that I have seen were of the spare, fine-drawn type.

Many Indians are well-endowed to pick up western athletics, but, generally speaking, their natural gifts do not lie in that direction. I have, for instance, never seen an Indian who had any innate idea of jumping—high or long.

My Aurangabad cavalry friend and I tried to introduce Rugby football into our respective units, but eventually had to give it up. After all, it is not every Briton, far less every "European," who is temperamentally suited for the spirit of this great game. We worked long and methodically, instructing in theory and a little practice, punt-about etc., and at last decided that the time had come for a trial game. It hadn't. And it never did! It was too exciting. We separated the combatants with difficulty, delivered another lecture,

explained that it wasn't a battle, and started again. All went quite nicely this time until the cavalryman and I had a tussle in goal. Then in a moment we were smothered under a pile of alternate Sikh and Mussulmán. Our skilful arrangements for mingling the players so as to avoid "class-consciousness" went for naught, the natural partisan and racial elements reasserted themselves, and hereditary instincts brought about a dreadful mêlée, in which the long hair of the disciples of Nának "came down," placing them at a considerable disadvantage—which, of course, had to be made good (*solutis vestis*) in some way equally painful to followers of the Prophet. And so, when all was over, to bed.

IV

SEVEN JUNGLE YEARS

THE hour before dawn. The hour when the least gregarious of mortals, waking, must acknowledge some sense of isolation; when the most nocturnal of wild creatures pause in their wanderings, inactive, silent, contemplative. The most death-like of all the sleeping hours, its profundity seemingly shared even by inanimate nature.

There is a curious paralysis, all its own, in this last and tightest clutch of night, a stubborn supineness of the flesh so long truant from the spirit, so obstinately sunk in the torpor that would hold its harsh taskmaster yet longer at bay. But that tyrant has ways and means of dealing with a recalcitrant slave, carries latchkeys against an early return to his rightful abode and a brisk setting to rights.

Thus disciples of Nimrod ever leapt eagerly from slumber at the call of bow and spear. And thus such a one sprang to the ancient call on the crest of the southern Satpuras—long before the jungle-cock could "sound his sweet réveillé," and more willingly far, we fear, than at the bugle's peremptory blast.

A dish of porridge and milk, another of eggs and bacon, with butter, bread, and tea, are likely to afflict more than one sense with a feeling of sheer indecency when the clock hands point coldly to about four of a morning. Yet the nature of our business brooks no toying with necessity, no pandering to mere habit of body, no parley with an unwilling gorge. What if it irks the slothful flesh to feed at sleepy hours? It may be evening of a long day before we eat our next square meal, for the long and baffling blood-trail, that may eventuate any day, or time, precludes all but the briefest of halts; and strenuous work on empty bellies—particularly young clamant white ones—lays up trouble in hostile climates under a tropical sun.

So Stoicism must be summoned to deal with so-called *chhóta házri* (small breakfast) even when served at hours more sma' an' wee than four: for well do I remember one unusually unwilling up-rising, weary assumption of full shikar apparel, forcible feeding, listless seizing of rifle, and staggering to the door—when my eyes fell on the hands that pointed to a little past midnight!

And thus, inner and outer man equipped for the coming day's work, we step into the hour before dawn.

Very still, cold, blue, and star-spangled above, and a dying moon about to disappear beyond dark lumpy hill-tops far to the right.

Palely dim expanses of short withered grass below, broken by black tree-clumps and crossed by a narrow footpath winding across this lofty flat-topped backbone of the Chikalda range. Four shadowy figures filing through the night and the slight indications of their business as they follow the foot-track: first a soft "pat-pat" of rope soles and a faint glint on shouldered rifle-barrels; then the more obtrusive crunch of nailed boots, and another glint; followed by the quicker distinctive thuddings of two pairs of naked heels.

The path plunges down through a dark belt of wood, emerging a hundred feet below, on undulating dry grass plateau, with scattered, stunted trees; and the indistinct view widens to vague distant flat-topped bulks. At the end of a mile or so these open spaces bring us to the brow of a projection, a promontory, that narrows as it juts out into the blue of night. To right and left the edge of our plateau trends dimly back, irregularly indented, and likewise falling to a dark void; but cut down sheer, in sombre basalt precipices, whereas the point over which we have craned before seating ourselves throws down a long, sharp-backed, grassy spur that disappears precipitously to unseen depths. A tiny foot-way vanishes over its nose.

The obscure surroundings suggest a lofty coast-line, with a sensation of great cliffs falling to an invisible and silent sea—which indeed, before long, the daylight will disclose, a

"sea" that lies nearly three thousand feet below us, its stretching horizon cutting the sky seventy, ninety miles away, the distant levels of the great Berár plain; while to the region of foothills and forests that lies immediately below our feet is a drop of fifteen hundred.

Down there, in the dark, thick green jungle borders the many converging stream-beds that have drained this wide plateau and its surrounding ridges, and in the miles of tangled alternate spurs and ravines that slope steeply thither live the big woodland deer that we seek—the sámbar.

They and other denizens of these hills are, it is true, to be found at this season, November to February, all over these Mélghát forests. But in the thicker woods their pursuit is a problematical and chanceful task. That is why it is wiser just now to hunt the drier and less overgrown slopes that face southward to the sun, and where at present the sambar also is better suited than in the more leafy fastnesses.

The moon has now set, and, under the colder star-glitter we await the false-dawn that shall set us descending towards the midway slopes favourable for our early searching and spying. Near me sits Abbas Khan, my sepoy orderly, companion-to-be of many a year of shikar, black of beard, sturdy of build, sparing of speech, ten years my senior in age. He has my shot-gun and cartridge-bag. I carry my rifle (·500 express) and about a dozen rounds, also naked binoculars, ready focused, slung short round neck. At a little distance squat the blanketed figures of two Kórkus: small black non-Aryan aborigines of these hills, belonging to one of the many jungle-dwelling tribes of fairly pure descent, indigenous to India, that became isolated here and there in the tracts of unconquerable "wild" as the swarming hybrids miscalled Indians gradually colonised the more open fertile plains. One of these little fellows carries my haversack (biscuits, cheese, an orange or two) and big, felt-covered aluminium water-bottle. It is chilly, but I have learned not to take coats, warm, on such occasions; for, later, they have to be enclosed in a Korku blanket and carried *en banderole* on a sweaty

Korku back, and are sure to pick up spear-grass of which they never will be rid.

In the cold weather the sambar's thirst is not impatient; nor, if it was, would he be forced to descend to the lower stream-beds, for pools now exist in many of the higher gullies. But the big stag loves a mud-bath at the dusk of dawn, and his soiling pools are mostly in the deeper ravines and glens. He has been quietly roaming all night, feeding here and there; perhaps smelling-out the haunt of a rival; policing his own bit of jungle, for which he is prepared to fight; or, if a master stag, exercising an arrogant and undisputed sway over yet wider territory. Seldom indeed will you see him in company with hinds. Occasionally he may condescend to admit some brocket to a distant and surly intimacy while lingering in the early sunshine ere seeking his "form," or lair, for the day's long siesta.

But he is capricious, within the square mileage of his seasonally chosen haunts, and one cannot rely on any great regularity of habit. Usually of an acute wariness that is, generally, better adapted to creeping, close-range foes than to the weapons of man, his movements are slow; he is given to long periods of immobility, only one or other of his ears moving slowly now and then, those unusually large, widespread, super-sensitive organs which mean so much more to him than his nose in this still and exceedingly dry air, this world of tinder-dry leaves and thickets of brittle underwood. In spite of his dark colouring and size—approaching five feet at the shoulder—that stand out stark against the pale yellow of open glades and thin coppice, he is by no means conspicuous; scattered black boulders occur frequently all over these hills and render him many a service.

In such secluded haunts as these all is "home"; he has no appreciable distance to travel to shelter, as from the borders of cultivated country, when raiding crops by night, and he may therefore lie up in any of the many suitably retired spots.

So there is the slow ascent at dawn from the soiling pool

CHÁNDRABHÁGA

down in the secret depths of some ravine where the giant "burroo" grass still stands green and surcharged with dew and the teak stem on the bank is plastered with wet mud scraped from a rough hide. Presently he reaches dense tracts of ripened spear-grass, the bending heads supporting dark masses of tiny detached seed-vessels, each with its slender barbed beard, and all wind-woven into horizontal prickly mats. At a touch, dozens of needle-points are shed, and, by means of their fine reflexes, worm their way into any penetrable material and through the smallest aperture, sometimes even sticking to the bare skin.

Pushing through this grass, chest deep, the stag derives evident satisfaction from mouthfuls of this abominable stuff, which he masticates with many a lustful contortion of curled lip, distended nostril, and everted eye-pits.

Awhile his deliberate steps crackle the big dried fallen leaves of teak and of tortured, gaunt-armed, soft, white-skinned *taklai*, until he reaches some narrow game-track and follows it up the steep.

Later he may be found loitering among the "incense-bearing" *sálé*, or *sálai*, by far the most numerous tree of the open, drier slopes, the gregarious, thigh-thick, yellow, scaly trunks set at close orchard intervals, their bare, contorted branches, that resemble those in Albrecht Dürer's singular drawings, attaining an average height of only 20 to 25 feet. The sambar likes to horn their soft, gummy stems, particularly in autumn, when cleaning the velvet off his newly grown antlers; and the bark shows red and frayed, 3 or 4 feet from the ground, with deep gashes much higher up—the work of sharp tine-tips. Bushes also, or teak seedlings he will horn and thrash to and fro into tatters. Possibly now he may couch in the scantier grass, temporarily, or stand sunning himself on one of the small open flats or terraces that occur on spurs, and where the grass is longer; yet all the while he is gradually making his way upwards to the bamboo clump, the lee of some tangle of branches, or other sheltered spot, usually on the side of a slope, where he intends to rest for the day. Here the dry

soil is pawed into a soft ledge, where he will settle down within about an hour after sun-up.

When finally couched he is very difficult to find. He lies close, silent, and still; while few approaching foes can entirely avoid the betrayal of the carpeting leaves. If come on unawares there is a sudden crash, and he plunges away out of sight among a thousand protective stems and branches. Even when he has been marked to his lair a stalk is seldom successful; silent approach is virtually out of the question. It is better, therefore, to transfer the leaf-crackling rôle to him, by quietly rousing him by a man or two sent round for the purpose, after you have taken up a carefully considered position to waylay him when he moves. My experience is mostly against a stereotyped beat for sambar.

In those 'prentice days, or rather I should say young days —for the wise shikari is always learning—my lack of experience involved an immense amount of hard going; glorious exercise, that profuse sweating so beneficial to health, such a safeguard against future blood-acids, toxins, and "elderly figures," . . . and occasional success was more than ordinariiy dependent on rare strokes of luck.

Those early big game days are so firmly impressed on memory that reference to the tattered old diaries at my elbow is seldom necessary.

Very impressive was the scene as I sat there waiting for dawn, more than thirty years ago. As the intense green tinge of the false-dawn crept up the sky and gradually extinguished the stars, the upper ridges of grass and jungle paled, yellowed, and seemed to intensify the shadowed depths beneath. Across that gulf, two miles S.-E., loomed up, level with us, the frowning bulk of Gáwalgarh, the loftiest of the many huge hill-fortresses of a bygone India. Wellington took this stronghold by a short bombardment and assault, immediately after his victory at Árgaon in the Berár plain below, ending the Marátha war of 1803. At this end of the Satpuras and within a 40-mile radius, lie three such great hill-forts

RUINS IN GAWALGARH FORT

The other two are Narnála and Ásirgarh. The latter, dominating the great gap of the Satpuras south of Khandwa, lies close to the main Bombay-Calcutta line of railway, which here passes through a belt of the drier, stunted kind of jungle. Narnala is larger even than Gáwalgarh, but not so lofty. Gawalgarh is situated on a precipitous-sided headland outlying from the main plateau and connected to it by a narrow, sunken neck—covered by the outer fort. The lofty inner fort, its top a mile long by half that in width, with all its buildings, lake-like reservoirs, and miles of thick black masonry battlements of cut stone, tier on tier, now lies deserted in long red spear-grass and euphorbia bush. Monkeys, of two kinds—*entellus* and *rhesus*—play along its ramparts; and it shelters a leopard or two, and an occasional wandering tiger, that prey on the cattle owned by degenerate descendants of the once Rájpút garrison. *Eheu! fugaces. . . .*

Illustrative of the old Indian idea of ensuring the stability of great buildings by immuring a human victim alive in the foundations, a skeleton was found inside a fallen piece of Gawalgarh outer fort, on an occasion when we had a combined artillery and infantry exercise, with shell and ball-cartridge, over the historic ground.

A sudden little dawn-wind soughs coldly up from below, shivering the dim grasses at our feet, and with it comes the first crow of a jungle-cock far down in his leafy home at the bottom of a woody *khóra*, or ravine.

We are facing due south. Under the growing light the yet dusky depths are slowly half-revealed. Great grassy spurs run dizzily down; the woody ravines that divide them unite to form the deep Pánchba Khóla, meet others from the flank of Gawalgarh, turn sharp westward, and join a much bigger glen fringed with rolling jungle that comes down from Bairát, 3,900 feet, five miles away and the highest point of these hills. This is the Chándrabhága stream, the "moon-visaged" of Indian hyperbole; and beautiful indeed. Draining a wide amphitheatre, it turns off southward towards a dim country

of low hills and scanty, scattered cultivation that leads down to the Berar plain.

It is not long now before the wonderful cold-weather dawn bursts forth. I know none quite like it for sheer power, strength in itself, and life for everything it touches. It seems to shout as it rushes up the sky, the colour-waves of its sudden conflagration in glorious contrast with the vivid emerald sheen that has heralded its approach. And I know no finer setting for it than the jungle, that to my mind is idealised in these great hill forests of the Satpura.

Central Indian jungles may not be comparable in quantity or variety of game, or in magnificence of scenery, or in climate with some of the other famous hunting-grounds of the world; but nowhere else in my wanderings have I found quite the same exuberant expression of life. Here the greater denizens are neither very numerous nor easy to find, though by night they make themselves heard, and in the cool of morning and evening; but the smaller voices of the wild, both by day and by night, are exceedingly numerous and varied. In comparison, the more imposing Himalaya is deaf and dumb. Quieter by far, also, is Africa's wonderful "bush," teem though it may with a profusion of fauna that I have, marvelling, watched throughout the daylight hours and listened for by night. . . . But this is anticipating!

Here, at any rate, dawn is magnificent, and its influence magical. All the wild life that has been awaiting its coming, chilled, silent, huddled in grass, under leaves, hidden among or perched on rocks, on trees, in a myriad lurking-places, leaps to and acclaims its summons. In cold, dew-soaked valleys the perching pea-fowl peal forth their poignant, far-echoing cries, and presently, with loud "*kok-kok-kok-kok*," . . . descend to earth. In a sheltered gully under beetling cliffs the distant crash of branches and thrashing leafage accompany a deep "*Whoop! . . . whoop!*" It is the rousing of the large grey, black-faced monkeys, *langúr*, that clamber and leap joyfully from tree to tree. A sudden humming rush of widespread pinions, and a great vulture planes closely by,

banking majestically with upturned, extended ailerons, in the first of that long soaring climb to his post in the remote blue ; others, still hunched on their befouled basalt eyries, set up their squeaking, quarrelsome hiss.

At the first of the false-dawn I had set out the men along the plateau edge right and left, to keep an eye on the slopes below ; but now a whistle calls them in, and in single file we pass over the brow of the spur on our downward way. The western crests beyond the vast bowl of the Chandrabhaga now begin to flame orange, but the dark wall of Gawalgarh and the eastern plateaus long cast deep shadow over the valley.

The narrow, hesitating track that we follow zigzags cleverly down the spur face. To how many hundred generations of bare aboriginal feet does it owe existence ? How often a year does it vary its twining course—horny toes skirting a fallen rock here, a slight washaway there ? At first we drop down at a gradient of at least 50°, the surface of the spur almost bare rock and supporting little but groups of candelabra euphorbia ; then, as the slope gradually eases, the grass grows longer and stunted trees reappear, offering useful handhold where the path plunges down rifts in sudden, short rock-scarps.

Our pace is slow, and there is many a little halt on the way, to scrutinise some likely piece of ground, some dark object that may be anything—from a trap boulder to a sambar, a pig, or, rarer in this particular part of the hills, a sloth-bear.

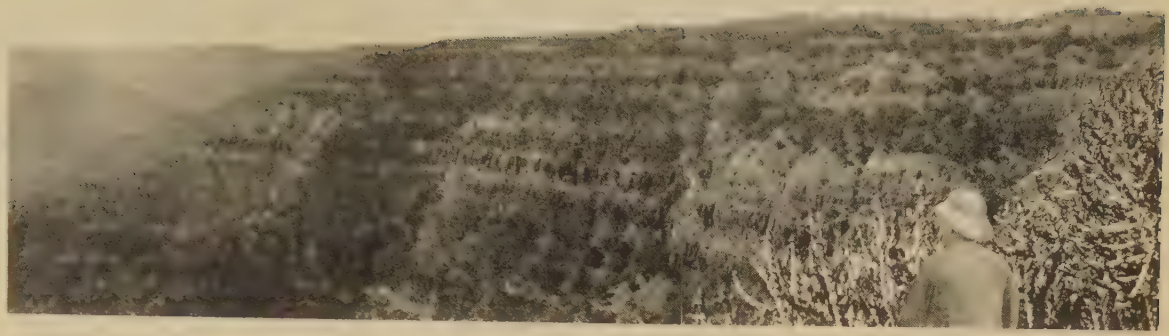
At intervals on the spur we follow there open out, slightly less steep, little glades from which the sálé trees stand back, and where the ordinary yellow dry grass gives place to longer growth with wonderful tints of brick-red, russet, dull pink. Much of it is still firm and succulent, with ripened seed-heads, strongly lemon-scented, that seem oily when crushed between fingers, while here and there, particularly in spots where there have been tiny moist hollows, spring-like seepage, during the rainy season, are to be found scattered clumps of *rausa*, or Roza-oil grass, about which there will be something to say.

Few leaves are left now on the trees of these upper slopes; they withered and fell in September-October, soon after the ceasing of the monsoon. In the moister, lower gullies the teaks still hold a few rough, cabbage-sized leaves, but even of these most have fallen to litter the ground with their resonant carpeting.

Six or seven hundred feet down, and the first beams of the sun come blazing over the plateau edge, now far above us, and ridge after ridge of sálé-studded spurs start out in golden relief, separated by deep purple ravines. At once the green barbets, larger hill congeners of the "coppersmith," have set up their incessant calls so characteristic of the higher ranges here and the woods round the edges of their plateaus; first a long-drawn, rapid "*tu-tu-tu-tu-tu-tu-tu*," which, slowing down, merges into the indefatigable "*kutúrr, kutúrr, kutúrru, kutúrru*" that is the inevitable accompaniment of Chikalda memories, and ceaseless because within hearing there are always two or three barbets, and they see to that. These queer, squat little birds, large-beaked, of the "laughing-jackass" shape, haunt the greener jungle that clusters about the upper cliffs and the moister spots at their bases.

And just as characteristic of Sátpúra nights is the strange, quiet, reiterated refrain of "quick, recur," or "*ouic-karkar; ouic-karkar; ouic-karkar,*" that echoes almost without intermission from the intense dark of the mangoes and other great trees. Ashamed to confess that never once have I seen the creature that produces this queer, soothing, nocturnal sound, I have heard it called the "ice-bird." Judging, however, from many a tree-perched vigil, I suspect that it is some kind of tree-frog.

There are two kinds of "small deer" that occur all over these hills, one the *khákar*, or barking deer (*muntjac*) with its hoarse and rather ventriloquistic cry of "aaow!" normally repeated at intervals of a quarter-minute or so, or, if the animal be startled, then three or four times in rapid succession—"Ow, wow, wow, wow," as it dives, short in front and head low, round-rumped through the tangle—of which it prefers the



CHIKALDA FROM THE SOUTH EAST

shady evergreen type. It is a *cervulus* (*aureus*), carrying tiny antlers comprising brow-tine and single unbranched beam, averaging about six inches long, and possessing a pair of razor-sharp, down-curving canines in the upper jaw that can inflict severe cuts, and have been known to eviscerate an unwarily attacking dog. The little horns are set on long, hair-covered pedicles, the bases of which continue, V-shaped and bare-skinned, down the face towards the nose.

The other little fellow is the four-horned antelope, darker and browner, not so " rumpy," and rather taller at the shoulder. His forward pair of hollow hornlets are the smaller, very seldom more than two inches long. He, too, has a curious little alarm cry, a sort of hollow " pooh-pooh-pooh " as he leaps away, nose held low and poked out. He is not so particular about shade.

One of the latter was started this morning from the long grass, and disappeared with a stifled cry over the brow of a steep slope. Following to look down over this, we presently heard a distant sound as of branches being knocked together, and halted expectantly.

The sound seemed to come from beyond the depths over which I hung, but was not repeated. It was uncommonly like a sambar-fight, or a stag horning some hard tree ; but might have been caused by a monkey or other small animal —the departed four-horn, possibly—displacing a stone ; which would then bounce down-hill into the tree-tops below.

Continually sweeping the more open parts of spurs and slopes with the glasses, and examining every suspicious-looking boulder or patch of apparent shadow, my eye at last caught a small movement—and I spied a sambar, the paler under-parts of its hindquarters turned towards me, several spurs and ravines lying between us. Its head was concealed by branches, but, as I gazed, it moved. A hind ! And now two more dark spots assumed the shapes of more deer—all hinds—that presently moved slowly across a glade and loitered about, feeding capriciously, probably picking up fallen fruits of the *aola*, hard little acid, astringent spheres like large, dull-

green glass marbles, that grow on treelets with soft, feathery, drooping foliage.

Not a sign of anything else rewarded a long spying of their neighbourhood. However, as this was the only direction in which we had seen any deer to-day, I decided to stalk the locality and examine it at close quarters. We accordingly discussed the best line by which to make our approach, and presently agreed that it would be both quicker and better to get right down to the bed of the Chándrabhága, follow it up-stream, and climb the marked spur from below. I had already bagged a sambar in another part of these hills and discovered the advantage of overlooking one's ground, or, if facing a jungly hillside on which an animal might be roused, of keeping well out from it. This policy, it is true, involves a rather longer shot, but enables one to see well into the cover and obtain a deliberate aim, which is seldom if ever possible if one pushes close in—to find view limited to a few yards each way.

Now, by going slightly up-hill and following the contour at about our present level we should have commanded a much better view, but that would have involved some difficult and noisy scrambling round the heads of precipitous gullies. So, first backing down out of sight, down we went, another 700 feet, to the deep main glen.

Here the now shrunken stream gurgles, shallow and crystal-clear, through lime-encrusted stones and boulders, murmuring at intervals into little green pools, basins in the outcropping basalt, or, less frequently, forming a long, deep *dhau*, or still reach, overarched by heavy green trees—great jungle mangoes, lofty *kowas*, and other moisture lovers, their mighty, flood-washed roots ramifying in all directions, their lofty interior domes of dense shade full of bird and insect life, and gloriously cool at high noon.

Away from the restful stream side, where one occasionally surprises a few grey jungle-fowl, the dry coppiced hillside at once rears steeply up, shimmering yellow in the blazing sunshine. Spur-fowl, too, one comes on, as they creep rather

less warily among the fallen leaves—a queer little fellow, *galloperdix*, half-fowl, half-partridge.

The faint traces of a tiny pathway show at intervals, leading up the glen, dropping at places to the river-bed, over a patch of sand, across the bouldery mouth of some tributary ravine. It is little used at this season ; but later, occasional bare feet traverse it, seeking jungle fruits, fish-pools, male bamboos far up at the secret headwaters below the Bairát precipices.

Presently a click of the tongue from Abbas Khan, and I turn. He is gazing down at the path. Ah ! The faint track of a tiger. A small one. Tigress, probably. Many days old. Coming down the ravine, farther on, we note it again. Same beast. Old tracks.

We must now be nearing the foot of that spur for which we are making. A very black face frilled by whitish-grey hair peeps at us round a tree-bole—disappears—a long grey tail hangs from behind a higher branch—then, loose-limbed, three or four of the " elders " of the jungle, langur monkeys (*Presbytis entellus*), lollop on all fours across the dry bed, and, gaining the far bank, seat themselves or walk away in silence, tails arched forward over their backs. In the baby season, to the mother langur is fixed a highly prehensile offspring ; not in the manner of the Old Man of the Sea or of the wretched, red-coated *rhesus* jockeying a hound, but gripping tenaciously from below, its breast glued to mother's, its miserable little black face buried in her throat.

Further movement up-stream, and the stealthy shapes of a few peafowl can be seen, sneaking up the bank into the long grass or alertly poised, head high, momentarily at gaze.

While thus prowling the jungle my rule was that my orderly followed me, normally, at about thirty paces distance, while the other men accompanying us were strung out and similarly spaced.

" Follow and conform to the leader's movements " was the order, closing up in thick cover, farther apart in the open, the onus of keeping touch resting on those following ; while an instant, motionless, non-peeping " down-charge " was

insisted on, the moment I was seen to take cover or creep forward. Naturally, I preferred to employ the same jungle men always, training them as desired, for a single unobservant or inquisitive fool was sure to ruin some "chance of a lifetime," or lose touch with us altogether; in the latter case he was pretty certain to be the man with the water-bottle.

Even with well-trained followers experience had taught me to satisfy myself that they were really "down" and alive to the situation when it arose. In the wise words of my C.O. of those days—"Few orientals can safely dispense with European supervision."

My orderly and I carried police-whistles on which we blew a little code of simple signals. Our position and circumstance, etc., could thus be communicated mutually when out of visual touch. No animal seems to connect this trilling whistle sound with danger. The human voice is a very different thing.

This quiet prowling has been called, in America, "still-hunting"—which is as good a term as any; and I confess that, of all forms of wild sport, it makes the greatest appeal bar one only. Pigsticking, hog-hunting with saddle and spear, is that one, unanimously acknowledged to be incomparably and unexceptionally the finest of all field sports; to which I would add—"provided that the competitive element is not overdone, and the race-meeting atmosphere absolutely barred."

Here you have the added exhilaration of a good horse between your knees, a creature whose intelligence and spirit intimately influence and are influenced by the rider. Saddle, bit, bridle, and spear, all are equally simple, primitive, unalterable things, ancient of days. And, reader, so are you, really. That exceedingly fine fellow *Sus cristatus*, the Indian wild boar, desperately fearless, active, and cunning, is on all but equal terms with you. You vie with a few kindred spirits in fair and generous comradeship and co-operation devoid of jealous competition, and every hot attribute of physical and mental fitness plays its part in the quick combination of horsemanship, judgment, eye, arm, and hands, . . . or ought to.

"Still-hunting," the stealthy threading of the undisturbed

haunts of game, is equally, in its sphere, the oldest natural way of man with wild beasts. True, one now carries weapons that are more deadly and of greater range ; but the initiated know only too well how soon and cleverly wild creatures adapt themselves to such changes ; while the uninitiated soon discover that there is something, after all, in " the man behind the gun," even should that be limited to seeing what they can do with wild partridges in our own home fields. To this day I confess that I often find more real satisfaction in the silent passage of some large English wood, away on the flank of the beaters, than in awaiting the result of the beat at the covert's end ; and a strong sympathy with the real, solitary, old-time poacher, he of a rabbit here, a hare at long intervals there ; the poacher from sporting instinct and not for thievish gain.

Thus the jungle always seemed more fascinating when one crept through it quite alone, seeming to share its secrecy, its hidden life ; with long halts to sit, listen, watch, and think, while time stands still. I used to sneak out of camp sometimes like that, waiting until my retainers were safely in the land of nod that follows the noontide oriental meal, or otherwise disposed of. My orderly disapproved most emphatically of any such solitary expeditions. Hardly, I may state, that he for a moment entertained the idea of my ever losing my way in any jungle, but simply because that sort of thing is quite incompatible with eastern ideas of the dignity and circumstance that should surround the goings and comings of great people. Could he have ordered affairs to his own inner satisfaction, I make no doubt whatever that he would have provided me with a magnificent entourage, a caparisoned elephant, a *sawári* or retinue of overdressed minions, and the brassiest of brass bands, by which I should be conducted with due decorum to some comfortably accessible spot where the necessary wild beast had been tethered or penned for my honour's princely sport.

And as I scribble or tip-tap these words, let me remark, in parenthesis, that, all in a descending scale, it is not solely to the oriental mind that they are applicable. Confront me

with the "multi-tiger man" and I will put a little query to him. Were those tigers all his very own? He knows what I mean. If they really were, then I take off my hat to him; but not if his object in acquiring them was to effect an arithmetical record.

As a matter of fact this "alone in the jungle" business is not the thrillingly dangerous avocation beloved of cinema men. It is better, of course, if one knows one's way about a little. It is, rather, a matter of convenience that one is accompanied by a few men that one can employ as scouts, rousers of game while one goes round the other side, extra eyes and ears, trackers, transporters of spare weapon, camera, refreshment; while, if luck is favourable, one can take away one's trophy at once and safely, and there will be somebody to guide villagers to the kill and a welcome supply of meat. Jungle-wallahs leave little indeed for the jackal or vulture, be it flesh of carnivore or ungulate!

Again, it is advisable, in a new and unknown locality, to take a local man who knows it and can save waste of time.

I certainly would not recommend a new-comer to prowl jungles alone, for he would lack the instinct born of experience of what not to do in a country where there are, after all, poisonous snakes, large and easily-offended bees, a somewhat hysterical bear, and, quite possibly, a tigress with young cubs and disconcerting habits that might surprise him into doing the wrong thing.

Thus in my jungle days I usually had a man or two within hail; but when sitting up at night, watching over a bait or kill for carnivora, early learned to observe an invariable rule of solitude. That is to say, I was escorted to my lurking-place, with the few requirements for a night vigil, and called for again with the milk in the morning. The latter was sometimes literally the case, for, if there happened to be a hamlet or huts within a mile or so, my men would sleep there and often bring me fresh milk, which, after I had personally seen to its boiling, helped down an otherwise rather cold breakfast.

In thus rambling on, the reader may perceive, but not, I

A CAPARISONED ELEPHANT

BELOW PÁNCHBA KHÓLA

hope, resent the fact that without boring him my idea is to edge him into the scene, to share if possible the interest and delight of those days, to avoid the false perspectives that result from exaggerated or unnatural description, pictures of easy triumphs, or attempts unduly to impress him. To this end the best way seems to be that I should get into a quiet corner, with one of the old jungle diaries to jog memory and tone down too much glamour of the past, and so re-create each scene that the mind is completely withdrawn into it and one is dreaming, nay, living the old days over again. Not that we desire or yet need to live in the past, but because thereafter, re-awaking to a quiet Surrey garden or to the home fireside, one realises more clearly the importance of getting the chiaroscuro of unfamiliar lands and the essential differences between the there and the here, which are better assimilated naturally, that is gradually, as we proceed.

Primarily there are the three sharply differing seasons of peninsular India to bear in mind. The "rains" or monsoon, from about mid-June to late September. The "cold-weather" thence onward until about the end of February, November-January being the cooler months. And the "hot-weather" from mid-March until the softer, moister change that brings the wheel full circle, and presages the breaking of the rains once more. In a vegetational sense these constitute respectively the growing, the ripening, and the dormant periods; but certain crops are sown in the cold weather and reaped in the hot.

Pour water on India, even on her deserts, and luxuriant growth burgeons forth; but, dense though this may appear, the soil is nowhere closely clothed with short grasses and herbs as in temperate climates. It is the long, rampant growth of hair, through which the skin can still be seen, rather than of close fur. A curious habit of many Indian trees is that they put forth fresh leafage towards the end of the hot-weather, in anticipation of the approaching rain. October's peculiarly intense sun soon changes the brilliant "arsenic-green" of the moist season, withers the grass, and strips the deciduous vege-

tation ; and, after a short period of vivid autumnal tints, all save evergreens and cultivation has changed to brown and yellow. The hot weather has a further desiccating and bleaching effect, from which evergreens and a few bare but brilliantly blossoming trees and shrubs stand conspicuously out ; in the plains a hot wind blows steady and strong, water-pools become scarce, and the shallower rivers dry up. Both cold and hot seasons are normally cloudless and set fair, except for a few thunderstorms or a brief bout of unseasonal rainfall, and, except in the jungle itself, both are exceedingly dusty. Oh, that dust ! The red dust of the Central Provinces ; the black dust of the Sind desert ; the fine white floury dust of the Panjab and Frontier—the inky dust-storms brewed and blown up by scorching winds across the indigo " summer " skies of oven-lidded North-West India for which I had little love ! The climate and seasons of the central parts of India display considerable divergence, from the deserts of Rájpútáná to the steamy south and east. Only in the last two directions is found the tropical forest of the story-books, and of that there is not a great deal.

Generally, the rainy season is pleasantly cool, sunless, mouldy, insecty, unhealthy, and likely to attack the white man below the belt ; while most big game shooting is in abeyance, chiefly owing to the dense cover. The malaria season proper follows on its heels, though indeed it is seldom absent. The four cold-weather months centred on Christmas are very delightful, with cool brilliant days and, comparatively, coldish nights. The hot weather is the healthiest time, and in the central parts of the country offers many sporting compensations for the heat—average hot day shade temperature 100° to 105° Fahr.—which is dry and not very oppressive, while nights are usually cool and refreshing. The jungle is, of course, considerably cooler than the then bare plains.

Common to all India is a naked gauntness of build that lacks soft and rounded contour. The bones show through. The bare soil dries hard. Plains are very flat. Hills rise suddenly, wall-like. Watercourses are deeply eroded, with

HOT-WEATHER
1. A JUNGLE ROAD 2. A JUNGLE POOL

perpendicular banks, or spread out in wide expanses of sand and shingle; they flood quickly, and as soon run down again.

The sambar-hunting recollections that have been interrupted by these dissertations refer to days in December-January, when climatic conditions in the higher Satpuras are well-nigh perfect, although hard physical effort at high noon in gullies facing south means very free sweating. This brings us back to the old Chandrabhaga, the stream-bed of which we have just left to climb the long spur leading to the grassy glades where those hinds were marked down.

Hitherto I had been able to walk bareheaded, free awhile of that necessary but wearisome incubus the *sóla* (pith) topi; but now the sun is stoking up, and I take it from Abbas Khan. The air is absolutely still, and so dry that there is nothing in it from a scenting point of view—seldom is except in the rains—the main desiderata are silence and no quick movements. Frequent halts are made to listen—for few creatures can move here without a betraying crackle—while it is only man's footsteps that are likely to maintain a continued susurrus. The binoculars are in frequent use, hanging close below chin, and my orderly has another and older pair. We are opening out one of the little glades now, and as the tree-trunks thin away several of them show red and frayed. The grass, too, has been trampled and shows one or two "forms" where deer have couched. So swiftly does time pass, those precious early hours, that the bigger stags must now have reached their day quarters, yet, perhaps, may not yet be finally settled down. And where hinds can find abundance of fallen aolas a stag may well have preceded them.

Sambar eat very largely of these berries. I remember, on passing some spot where a stag had fallen many days before, finding the tragedy marked by nothing save about a sackful of undigested aolas. Korkus, vultures, crows, dung-beetles had done their work and swept clean, but the mournful little heap of berries long remained.

Climbing steadily and stealthily, we found the place where

the hinds had been seen ; yes, three or four little aola-trees here ; and in the trampled grass numerous tracks of sambar, numbers of peeled tree-stems, fresh droppings. This was about half-way up the hill-sides towards the plateau edge near Chúrni.

Glancing back, I could see that Abbas Khan had halted, watching me, so signalled to him to sit tight while I went slowly on, for I had it in my bones that there was likely to be something here, in these delightful "gamey" looking declivities beyond the aola glade (*aola-páti*).

In describing various localities in jungle country it is inevitable that native place-names should be used. Very delightful are these, and happily one recalls them as I do now, my eye wandering over a beautiful one-inch Forest Department map that I still cherish, one of the finest examples of hill delineation ever seen ; a dead-accurate combination of contouring with vertical hachures, that shows and recalls to memory every little nook that I know so well. Here are a few such places : *Ámjhíri* (mango-tree spring), *Andhéra Khóra* (dark ravine), *Chínch Khéra* (tamarind hamlet), *Páchámba* (five mangoes), *Muing-páti* (flats by the muing-trees), *Andhár-ban* (gloomy jungle).

Well, I had not crept pigeon-toed a hundred yards through the crushing leaves—with frequent halts—when "*Wheeónk !*" came a bell of alarm, and something heavy crashed away. The blows of its long leaping hooves thumped loudly on the hard hill-side. Three or four of those great jumps ; then silence ! I must have stood there a minute—many minutes it felt—when away across the deep khora into which the invisible deer had plunged, and nearly level with me, I could hear a distant stirring and leaf-crackling. It continued at intervals and seemed to progress along the opposite and hidden hill-side. This, clearly, was not the animal that I had just disturbed and which I judged to be a hind.

I could not hope to move in silence among those dreadful leaves. Move to my right I must, for thence alone I could obtain a moderately clear view across the ravine. I moved,

therefore, deer-like—a few steps, then a halt, and so on. Here and there my rope-soles enabled me to traverse some rocks in silence. The leaf-crushing across the way seemed to have ceased. At last the coppice thinned out, I reached some close-set sálé stems, and stared through them. About a hundred and fifty yards away the faint crackling again rose from a dense thicket of dry twiggy stuff. Silent and motionless I stood, waiting; the sun, now high and fiery, blazing down on the still jungle; the resinous scent of the sálé all round; the everlasting shrilling of insects pervading the warm air.

The leaves crackled again. Something showed dimly through the tangle.

Then, suddenly my nerves contracted. A dark shape slowly passed a small break in the trees, vanished, again emerged. Horns! Great tree-like antlers! A massive neck and shoulders; then, slowly, the whole of him. Glory! A stag sambar! black, massive, truculent, large and rather bushy tail raised and stuck stiffly out, shoulders bowing slightly to each dignified step. Two or three steps, then a halt—and the great head comes round, the wide ears hinge forward.

He is very suspicious, the hind's alarm bark and crashing jumps have filled him with doubts, possibly moved him from a comfortable holt, and he is anxious to locate the worry that has invaded his home life. Whatever he may think of my leaf-crushing, it is much too distant to put him to flight. Tigers are harmless at long range, wild dogs cannot easily approach unheard, Korkus he has often watched or merely moved away from, into the next khora. In any case, this neighbourhood seems unhealthy, that hind evidently still stands there, hinging her ears, and he does not mean to stay. But the move is not up to him—yet. Motionless he stands, visible, yes, yet completely covered by a thousand twigs and branches that no bullet can make sure of passing. One's mind races, turning in every direction for some solution of the problem, rifle ready, sweaty trigger-hand stealthily wiped dry on clothing. A single step, an incautious movement,

and he will locate us and dive into the thicker cover that lies in front of him.

Panic seizes me that one or other of my men will follow me before long, ruining all.

At last his head turns; he is in no immediate fears; he stands irresolute a little longer, then paces on.

A steady shot is a sitting shot, yet how often possible in grass and undergrowth over which one can seldom then see?

There he goes, deliberate, cunning; he is about to pass behind a piece of thicker stuff, a mass of dried creepers festooning some bushes. At once a few side-steps take me behind, and in prolongation of similar cover on my side. I risk a forward move through some mercifully silent grass. Then, presently, another, and thus, in course of time, approach the low bush of *bér* that is my last hope. I reach it, and peer round. This is better.

He is still behind that thick stuff, but begins to move out. I am judging the distance for my shot, for I can see that a chance may come if he holds on his present course. Less than a hundred, it looks. In another moment he will be in view, but probably for the last time, for he is nearing the crest of the declivity and must pass beyond it soon. The rifle is beginning to shake, held ready in young hands that are trembling with intense suspense. The moment is approaching. It is here. Up comes butt to shoulder . . . oh those twigs . . . sight on shoulder, in prolongation of foreleg. . . . *Bang!*

I seem to hear a thud—rather a sharp one—as with head laid back the great brute plunges convulsively forward and his muscular buttocks urge him slantingly up the hill-side. My muzzle follows the fleeting black figure, concentrates, and the left barrel is loosed. But, alas, there is no result. He is all among the tree-trunks. And an instant later he has lurched over the skyline. . . .

There was a nasty little precipice of black rock round the head of that deep gully, over which hung the usual lime-incrustations of a "dry waterfall," so it must have been many

minutes, scrambling round above that, before I could reach the place where he had disappeared and run across searching right and left in waist-high red grass, quartering the ground hungrily for tracks, for blood. But not the ghost of a sign allayed my misgivings or buoyed up my sinking spirits. The grass was too dry to register the passage even of so large a beast. I reached the far edge of it and stood there miserably, vainly listening for leaf noises, for any hopeful sign. Presently the men, instructed by my whistle signal, arrived.

For more than two hours we fairly combed the neighbourhood without finding the faintest clue. We retraced our way and examined the place where the stag had been when I fired, with like result. And, at last, we gave in, and made for shade, water, and rest.

Down again in the river-bed I whipped off my topi, laved my blazing head and neck in a cool green pool, and stretched out beside haversack and water-bottle. Least said, soonest mended. But crowding thoughts of this biting failure will not be denied. That thud? No. It must have been a tree. He went far too strongly uphill for any wounded beast. I persuade myself that he went away unharmed, got off scatheless. Better so. Heigh-ho! Such is shikar. Water, food, and tobacco will help us to accept our *kismat*, throw off despondency.

Those were days when I took every opportunity of exploring that new country, and the day being finished with regard to finding sambar or anything else before late evening, I determined to climb the long, lofty spur that runs down eastward from Bairát and above the Chandrabhaga's right bank, and work homeward round by the big hill-top. One of my Korkus was despatched to Chikalda with orders for my pony to be brought out to a rendezvous.

The climb from the river-bed was exceedingly steep, with no kind of path or track to help until we reached the top of the ridge, but fortunately was all in the deep shade of the well-wooded northerly aspect of what I knew as "Long Spur." Once atop, the rise westward is gradual, but it is a

villainous locality for waist- and even shoulder-high spear-grass, by which the old path was quite overgrown. Short of the closest (and thereby stuffiest) gabardine there is nothing that will keep it out; but after considerable woe I caused large green unshed teak-leaves to be plucked, and pinned with stout grass-stems, fashioned together into a kind of sporran for each man, which, after the manner of Adam's fig-leaf, permitted of a cautious traverse of those infernal regions. Subsequently, by getting the local dyer to dip my khaki coat and breeches in a concoction of *bábúl* (acacia) bark, or the dhóbi to starch them, the pores of the cloth could be sealed temporarily against entry of the *kússal* barbs—but this made very uncomfortable and noisy wear. In any case, "woe unto ye," when, owing to wear, any part of your nether garments became frayed—or even soft!

I saw no game during this long tramp, and, on top of these ridges, very little good-looking ground; but was charmed with Bairat. Here, at the highest point of all the Satpuras save the Pachmarhi group, were a few *gaoli's* (cowherd's) huts, and the hill-top, smaller in extent than Chikalda, is terraced with well-wooded cover full of jungle-fowl, and evidently holding attraction for bears. One or two *jhíra* (water-soaks, or springs) in neighbouring khóras supply a little water. Coffee should grow well here. In youthful enthusiasm I constructed a little daydream of a delightful Satpura shooting-lodge up here, with one's own water-reservoir, coffee plantation, garden, far from the madding crowd of that metropolis Chikalda, with all its fourteen bungalows, six miles away, towards which, his nose turned homeward, and very full of himself, my Arab now showed me the shortest way.

So ended a typical day after sambar—more than that, a lucky day; for not only had I found a real good stag, but had been vouchsafed an off-chance of bagging him. On the average day—in good country—one may see hinds, brockets, an unshootably small head perhaps, but very very seldom a big one, taping, say, over 38 or 39 inches from burr to tip. To secure a head like that is reserved for a real red-letter-day,

all the more glorious when at last it does arrive—as it will, if one sticks to it. And at any moment of these jungle prowlings there is always the chance of coming across other big game, even a tiger.

Chikalda was a quiet little place at all times, but in the cold weather was often empty of sahibs. The forest officers, whose headquarters it was, were usually away, touring their other jungles. In the hot weather, during the years to follow, when my regiment was stationed at Ellichpur, there would be about twenty to twenty-five sahibs living on the hill, and more when we used to move the whole regiment up into camp—for "training in hill and bush warfare"—which, incidentally, enabled the "Adjeetant sahib," which happened to be your humble servant, to put his hand on young sepoys that showed aptitude for jungle craft, and displayed powers of endurance and energy. These would be drafted into my "shikar gang," or somebody else's, for several of us were keen shikaris.

The best of those youngsters would in course of time receive trial in non-com.'s rank; and as proof of the value of the shikar training we gave them I may say that in course of time they nearly all rose to the top of the regimental native roll, some to the highest attainable post of Súbadár-Major, and earned many honours and rewards in the service, including 1914–18.

Although only some 2,500 feet above the Ellichpur plain, Chikalda offered a delightful change of climate, and enabled our officers' families to escape the three hottest months of the year without the expense and exposure of a long, red-hot railway journey across India to some "real hill-station" in the Himalayas or the Nilgiris.

One rented a bungalow on the hill, and the good old bullock-cart crawled up in a couple of days with one's servants and household belongings, even to pianos!

There are three ways up from Ellichpur—by the main road, 30 miles long, a very beautiful drive, rising slowly through the hills; by a steep fair-weather cart-track, 21 miles; and

by what was known as the Fort, or Wellington's Fort road, 17 miles. The second of these was the speediest. One of the regimental *tongas* (hooded, fore-and-aft spring carts) and a pair of regimental transport ponies soon tooled one out to the foot-hills in the cool of morning, where one's horse had been sent on overnight, and the journey would be completed in the saddle.

Very pleasant it was thus to escape from the scorching heat down below, and, after a well-earned breakfast, lie back in a long chair in a cool verandah, listening to the lazy drone of insects in the trees, where also fluted and flashed the golden "mango-bird"—the oriole; while before one lay displayed a splendid prospect of wild mountain and stretching jungle—the Melghat proper—leading the eye away fifty, sixty miles, right across the main Tapti Valley to the blue hills of Kálibhít —"the black wall."

Most of the bungalows were built at the edge of the irregularly indented plateau, and, wherever possible, facing north, on the "points," or promontories; some of them being surrounded by thickets of glistening, red-berried coffee that obtained its needful shade under the giant jungle mango and other large trees that clothed the edges and top of the hill.

The immediate vicinity of the station was reserved as sanctuary for wild life—except carnivora—and was full of the cries of jungle and hill birds of all kinds and of barking deer. Leopards, and even a tiger on rare occasions, used to meet their *kismat*, or fate, from time to time not far from the bungalows: which interesting fact led to what I considered exaggerated precautions on the part of my wife for our first-born—which solicitude indeed was not lessened after she had found herself in the middle of a large pack of wild dogs while taking a morning drive in the neighbourhood.

Very fair driving roads radiated from Chikalda and led also to many a distant "point" of the surrounding plateaus, each with its appropriate name—"Prospect," "Monkey," "Bellavista," and so on. And long and delightful jungle

A CHIKALDA VERANDAH

A JUNGLE RAMBLE

rambles were to be had by following the jungle paths cut along and down shady hill-sides, where indeed one might at any moment come across any of the Melghat's big game—except bison, which I have not seen nearer than the great Ábápur ridge, three miles north-west as the crow flies.

As already indicated, the northerly aspect of these hills, somewhat sheltered from the sun and subject to heavier rainfall, is the cooler and more thickly wooded, and my wanderings in search of sport—my usual routine being a day on the hill and a day off—took me alternately north and south of the great central ridge. Sundays were rest days—unless some specially tempting news came in. Immediately on arrival I had sought to get into touch with the jungle men in the neighbourhood who, it was reported, best knew the haunts and habits of local game. As a result I came to employ one Gáya of Ámjhíri, a *Nihál*, in tying out young domestic buffalo bull-calves as tiger -baits, which, being merely a *paltan-wallah-sahib* (regimental officer) and not one of the high-heaven-born civil officials, I had considerable difficulty in purchasing.

In India, where all things are carried out *hukm sé* (by order), time is necessary for deep consideration, cogitation whither this or that little action may lead a subordinate official ; and it would have been a dreadful thing if, in aiding a simple " sepoy officer " to buy baits, a *tahsildár* or any other native-*dár* had helped him to shoot a tiger that was, naturally, the *hakk*, or rightful due, of those set in *real* authority !

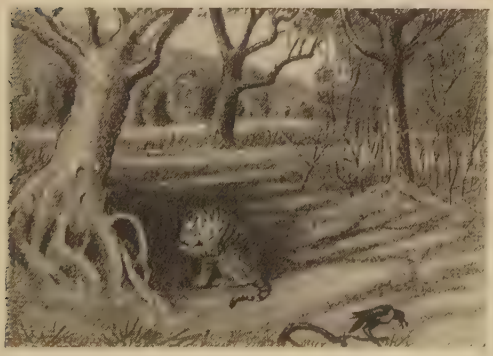
Now, the number and position of baits put out at a given time depend partly on one's station in life—or purse, so wonderful is the rupee even in the *hukm*-ridden East—partly on one's facilities for making assignation with the bait-eaters ; for, speaking generally, it is wasteful to get two kills at the same time in widely separated spots, unless circumstances or organisation enable one to deal with them both, and promptly. And in sparsely populated tracts the collection of beaters is a difficult and lengthy affair. I therefore restricted my baits to one locality at a time, but in

that neighbourhood I might put out two or three on the same evening—reasonably far apart—for the sake of the increased chances of tempting my quarry to a kill.

This is not a treatise on the art of tiger-shooting, but merely a record of its incidents and joys. If the reader desires to read what to me seems to be the very best example of the former let him obtain Mr. F. C. Hicks's *Forty Years among the Animals of India.* Colonel A. E. Stewart's *Tiger and Other Game* is another useful text-book, and also contains a good list of shikar literature. By a long way the best book that I have read on the habits of central Indian game animals is that of Mr. Dunbar Brander, who has made exceedingly good use of his opportunities for observation.

One tiger at least was perambulating the Amjhiri Valley, by which the main road approached, and after three blank nights of baiting, a half-naked messenger arrived with the ever welcome news—*gára húa!* (a kill has taken place). That was as I sat finishing an interrupted breakfast; for, on first sitting down to it, a distant yelling across the ravine adjoining the bungalow had conveyed the exciting information that a tiger was sitting on the Bairat road! I had seized the essentials and rushed out to find that a party of Korku women going out to cut grass had met a tiger, which had lain down on the roadway in front of them. By the time I had reached the scene this friendly creature had been gone some time; and, after verifying the report by the tracks on the road and judging the animal to be a young one or a tigress, I returned to my meal, intending to take out a bait at once to the dense gullies where it had disappeared. On top of this the Amjhiri news came in!

In quiet forests like the Melghat *Felis tigris* or *pardus* may return to his last night's kill early in the afternoon—or, indeed, at any time, depending on weather and individual characteristics; but, as I knew that my buffalo had been tied within a stone's-throw of the main road, just by the fourth milestone, I delayed my departure until after 3 p.m. A spring of my dogcart snapped half-way down the steeply winding descent



A JUNGLE TRILOGY

to the high-lying valley, and I walked the rest of the way. This was my first tiger-kill, an important and thrilling affair. On reaching the scene of the tragedy I found that it was certainly a tiger and no leopard that had killed and then dragged the bait only a short way—breaking the tether—to the edge of the 3-foot bank of a tiny dry watercourse that came down under the road from its source in the big woody hill-side that towered directly above us, 500 feet, to the edge of the Móta flats. I had reconnoitred this place previously, and accordingly Gaya had already erected a *machán*, a small platform of cut poles tied with bark withies and a little " hand-rail " round it, all screened by leafy branches, at about twenty paces from the buffalo, in a rather exiguous tree, but the only suitable one, a *tiwas*, on the tough black branches of which many leaves still remained.

Wasting no time in looking about, and keeping everybody carefully away from the kill, I was settled aloft by half-past four, and sent the men away to the wattle-and-daub huts of Gaya's village, about a mile off. Freshly gathered, non-crackly leaves had been handed up to me, with which I further concealed my position ; field-glasses, water-bottle, blanket, were conveniently disposed of, and my 12-gauge rifle (built for my father by Dougall) was loaded and placed ready to hand, its muzzle resting level with the peep-hole in my leafy screen, so that by a slight movement I could raise and align it on the kill. I wore an old-fashioned sort of cloak that when thrown back retained its position by small straps and set the arms free.

I was using a night-sight that to the best of my recollection was my own idea. This was an ordinary calling card, out of one end of which a V-shaped piece had been cut, leaving two little ears, which were then turned up at an angle. A rubber band or two secured the card to the top rib of the weapon so that the bottom of the V coincided with the bead of the fore-sight. This arrangement presupposes some illumination of the white ears ; but Indian nights are seldom dark, and starlight is enough for sharp young eyes. The dog-ears should

be turned and adjusted so as best to face and reflect the source of light.

That was by no means my first jungle vigil, but it stands out unusually clearly by reason of the occasion. And, as I write, there returns all the fascination of that evening scene, the swiftly fading tropical sunset that for all too brief a time turned the hill-sides to flame; the sudden cold shade that fell across the quiet valley; the short interregnum of lingering day at my back, and night in front; and all the then strange and eerie sounds of Nature's wild children, some settling to sleep, others preparing for their wakeful time, that echoed in that dim pocket of the eternal hills.

At first one's thoughts revolve round the immediate situation. Once more one wonders whether the prognostications formed as to the movements of the quarry will prove correct, the mind reconstructs many a scene in which wish often fathers thought. *When? Whence? How?* These are the words that matter, after and secondary to *IF*!

Presently, following a preliminary period when every rustle, every shadow means too much, the mind may turn into other and ordinary channels. Once or twice over the years of my jungling I tried to set down night-watch and other impressions there and then, scribbling by moonlight or by feel, in a note-book; but found it useless. That was before I watched a certain portrait-painter at work. He stood awhile, briefly regarding his model: then he turned his back and worked long and swiftly. His most convincing work was done after the sitter had gone.

At six o'clock, nearly in the gloaming, to my horror and indignation I hear a native approach, westward bound, along the road that lies little more than fifty yards to my right. He certainly is no Korku. His fears probably comprise every conceivable species of wild beast and *bhút* (devil). The sounds that he produces cannot, surely, fail to scare my tiger.

"Ha!" he shouts. "Aha! Ho!" at the top of his voice. Later, there follows the bawling enigma of eastern "song." On my little perch I writhe in impotent wrath. My

toe itches to help this musical genius on his way, to introduce him to a proper white devil once and for all. . . . The wretched fellow must then have done a bit of a scuttle ; for, thankfully soon, he and his obbligato fade round a bend of the hill, and I am left ruffled, irritated, and rather hopeless—until reflection brings resignation, and peace in the conclusion that it cannot be the first time that tigers have had to put up with this sort of thing.

Twenty minutes later the final faint day-sheen had all but failed, when there fell one of those curious silences from which even the jungle is not immune. On the neighbouring dark slopes the crepuscular breeze died away. Night-birds held their breath. Crickets ceased or subdued their stridulations. The watch in my pocket began to tick very loudly—and . . . *something moved in the little nullah.*

On such occasions men's few fleshly senses seem maddeningly blunt. My eyesight was, always, comparatively sharp, particularly in the dark or nearly dark. Smell is seldom of great service to humans ; anyhow, I smoked too many cheroots for that : and now, in thirty-odd years, by careful computation, having consumed about six miles of Mr. Spencer's 5-inch Madras malaria-shifters, it hasn't *got* to matter. But hearing ! Ah ! I came to know something about that ! Before long, I learned never to start on a shikar trip without having my ears carefully overhauled and syringed in hospital. I never needed to fit microphones, but the natural wax *cum* India's dust will defeat you when you want to hear big game breathe and *think !*

So, that night, I thought that a stone had shifted down there. Later, and wiser (as above) I would have *known* that it shifted. Then I became aware of an indefinite susurrus, a minute sound akin to the rustling—nay, the moving—as when one's arm is raised slowly, of human garments. I used to think that it was the animal's breath. Now, I almost believe that it is *folds and movements of his harsh-haired skin*—if not the microphonic sound of the squeegee action of his pads on the ground !

With face close up and peering intently through the loop-hole, I was pondering the reality or otherwise of those then novel phenomena, when a whitish penumbra seemed to develop itself, just beyond the cadaver of the dead bait. Next moment my heart is thumping like a great drum, for an apparition, a white-robed ghost, is slowly elongating, a tall white form rising from the dim watercourse! I had never thought of a tiger like that. My captious doubt was strengthened by the recollection of that fool on the road. And I had been long enough in the East to know that our Aryan brother is capable of *anything*, no matter how grotesquely impossible it may seem to a western mind. Anyway, I felt for my glasses (pre-prism) and slowly raised them.

Sure enough! Looming startlingly close and huge, a tremendous tiger stands starkly there, towering over his prey, the black stripes standing out prominently on white of massive chest and forefront.

The use of the binoculars seems to have steadied me. Gradually I set them down. Gently, slowly, my hands slide up the ready-ledged rifle. Thumb on old-fashioned hammer, and forefinger cautiously easing trigger, I cock it in dead silence. The butt rises inch by inch to shoulder. The muzzle is pushed a little forward, until the white card-ears catch a faint hyalescence from the sky. They are raised and lowered once or twice until they seem to—yes—they frame that motionless, whitish chest.

In that critical instant I suddenly felt my shakiness returning . . . those insistent heart-beats again about to thud . . . and, on the instant, my trigger finger contracted. The heavy detonation, the shower of black-powder sparks, and a short, muffled "woof!" all blent into a fraction of time. A pall of black-powder smoke hung on the still air. The sound of the shot bellowed in the hollow of the near hill. And there was a heavy rolling noise on the stones of the nullah.

Almost immediately this ceased, or merged into a weighty galloping, as of a horse on soft ground, a distinctive cantering,

" galumphing " sound that died away in the direction of and across the road. . . .

I sat there thinking hard, and presently reached for the water-bottle, for my throat was dry. Indulged in a luxurious stretch and got my legs out full-length. No. No smoking.

He had " woofed " ! . . . but I had read, somewhere, that a merely startled tiger may do this.

He had rolled about in the nullah ! . . . that was hopeful.

He had then gone away at a strong gallop, apparently able to avoid the many bushes and obstacles in his way, for I had heard no crash. . . . H'm !

Presently I came to the conclusion that there was no object in continuing my watch, for the tracks had shown that only one tiger was concerned in the kill. I blew my whistle, the men duly arrived, and I walked a short cut up-hill to some huts called Sháhpúr ; where I found a country pony to take me home, and was told that a tiger had killed a cow at dusk, within half a mile. With this, however, nothing could be done at present ; but it made it, in a sense, a three-tiger-day.

Next morning I biked down to the fourth milestone and arrived just after dawn, passing my orderly with Gaya and two Korkus on the way. Walking to the kill, which had not been touched by any beast of prey during the night, I examined the neighbourhood. In the nullah were signs of the tiger having rolled about, but no traces of blood on the stones or anywhere else.

The men now arrived and joined me in slowly tracking the tiger to and across the road. Ten yards beyond it, up-hill, we found a spot of blood on a grass-stem ; and soon after this a plentiful blood-trail began. This was all that I wanted for the present, as the cold in that gloomy, woody hollow was intense and my hands so benumbed that I could hardly hold the heavy rifle. We accordingly returned to the roadside and waited for the sun to come over the hill ; while I took the opportunity of discussing the situation and whispering my instructions, which, briefly, were to the effect that Gaya

and the Korkus were to attend to the tracking, while I covered them, slightly in advance on one flank, with Abbas Khan in a similar position on the other with my ·500 express. On him I carefully impressed that he was on no account to fire unless something went very wrong indeed. Musketry training and the safe use of a sporting rifle in thick jungle are rather different things.

At last the warm beams of the sun struck down through the trees. Rising to our feet, we took up the now easily followed trail, passing two places where crushed grass and gouts of blood indicated that the tiger had fallen and rolled about. Then the slope rose at a much steeper angle, which, for a variety of obvious reasons, called for redoubled care. Closely eyeing every inch of the way, we worked slowly, slowly upward—when suddenly I saw the great brute ! Directly above us and some thirty yards away he lay, belly towards us, stretched on his right side, between some rocks.

His eyes seemed to be closed. There was no sign of breathing. And our passage through the dried leaves had been by no means silent.

In the same moment there came a slight scuffle behind me —which meant that with monkey agility, and very wisely, each jungle man was well up his own little tree.

By all the rules born of trial and error in dealing with wounded felines I made a bad mistake in not going round and getting above that tiger ; but when young men see their very first "lying dead," rules and good advice are likely to be forgotten. Besides which, in the jungle, as in love, lost opportunities may not recur !

And so, urgently waving my orderly back behind me, up went the rifle and I plugged straightway into the tiger's chest. At the shot he raised his head, glared round, spotted us instantly, and at once came crashing straight down, head on.

Immediately putting in my left barrel—which was a miss— and hearing a deafening explosion that told me that Abbas Khan had loosed off the express close behind my left ear— which, luckily, was another !—we leapt, as one man, for the

shelter of some small trees a few paces to the left. Even as I turned, loading up, there was a crash—and the tiger was rolling in the teak-leaves and bushes, very very near the spot where we had lately stood. My first shot had taken effect, but not a moment too soon.

This time I quickly got above him, and, putting a 12-gauge bullet through his back, he subsided, motionless.

Creeping closer in, I gave him a quite unnecessary "settler" in the back of the neck and head. Then, having heaved a stone or two, I reached him; and, in the words of my old diary, "with an inexpressible joy" was examining, handling, and gloating over my first tiger.

It was long before I could leave him.

First, to trace the effect of last night's bullet. I found that it had struck full in the chest, but, owing to the shot being a plunging one, had then passed downwards and run along not very deeply below lower chest and belly, causing much loss of blood but not penetrating any vital part. The decisive shot was the first fired to-day—the others really being unnecessary.

Two more Korkus had now turned up, and seven of us made several ineffectual efforts to move the tiger towards the roadway. Sending for more men, I left A. K. in charge, and biking homewards dispatched a bullock-cart to the scene. About noon we heard the beating of a tomtom and shortly a considerable procession arrived at the bungalow.

Four hours after death this tiger measured 9 feet 6 inches along the curves of his back, which means that he was really an inch or two longer by that measurement. Round the neck was 28 inches, and forearm 19. He was a very thick-set, short-tailed animal; and, illustrative of "mug's luck," about the best, taking him all round, of my thirty-one years.

As soon as the skin had been removed—and the skinning of one's first tiger is an engrossingly interesting affair—the little crowd of jungle folk and villagers that had patiently squatted round descended like vultures on the carcase; and, before

long, not a vestige of it remained. All had departed in little baskets, head-loads borne away by chattering and delighted women and children. But my orderly had personally seen to it that the *Bir-nak* had first been dissected out and preserved. These are the small, boomerang-shaped bones, rudimentary clavicles, that are found embedded in the shoulders of the larger felines, unconnected with the skeleton, and are regarded as charms of much potency in the acquisition of a large family, mostly boys.

Considering this matter of numerous descendants that is regarded perhaps rather too arithmetically in the East, I may mention the following:

One of those peripatetic native "astrologers," plying his trade in a Himalayan hill hotel verandah one idle morning, foretold his client, a pretty English girl, that, *inter alia*, her fortune was to have twelve children. "Oh, but I don't *want* twelve children!" she cried petulantly; on which came the gravely disapproving rejoinder:

"Yu doan't wahnt; but yu will ha-ave!"

Well, that evening I again sat up for the other tiger near Sháhpúr. But the arrangements had been bungled, I had not been able to look into them, and I cut the vigil short; which was fortunate, for the animal did not return to those hyena- and jackal-ragged remains.

Lest an exaggerated idea be formed of Chikalda's tiger-shooting possibilities, let me remark that during the seven years that followed I shot only one other in its close vicinity. There will, however, always be tigers up there, in numbers that fluctuate greatly from year to year according to circumstances and somewhat similarly to good and bad partridge or grouse years at home. They are attracted by the good shelter, water, deer, and wild pig, by the cool climate, and particularly by the numerous cattle that are kept by the *gaoli* cowherds, a caste whose local headquarters are established on the Mota-Chikalda plateau. Should the reader be interested in the matter, he will find some details about the

gópi (cowherdesses) in an Indian passion-play, the *Prém Ságar*, or "Ocean of Love," in which he will also find, as I did when studying that textbook for the higher-standard Úrdu, interesting particulars concerning the holy but sportive Shri Krishn Jee—one of the most popular incarnations of Vishnu.

When I revisited those haunts of my youth in 1921 the old tiger-coverts had been largely increased by a rampant growth of *raimúnia* (*lantana*) formerly (!) known as the Forest-officer's curse, and affording ideal harbour for all short-legged animals, while practically impenetrable by humans, owing to its low dense growth and the harsh, shark-skin abrasiveness of its tendrils.

We certainly got a few Melghat tigers during our seven jungle years; but, owing to their scattered distribution, the great extent of continuous forest, and the unusual difficulties in raising a sufficiency of beaters, we seldom spent more than casual or week-end leave there. Our longer leave was nearly always devoted to expeditions farther afield, to better and more easily worked tiger and other game country—chiefly the southern parts of Berár and the C.P. (say 100 miles), and, to include bison, buffalo, swamp-deer, etc., to the Bastar State (300 miles), or the Eastern Ghát̀s (Bison Land) (400). The north-easterly corner of the Nizam's Hyderabad country also was at one time a wonderful place for tigers, where, owing to the readily worked patches of jungle, and the absence of pig and deer (which made one's bait irresistible) tiger shooting was as easy as shelling peas!

The title of the present chapter is based on our long sojourn at Ellichpur, with all its facilities, local and distant, for wild sport of many different kinds, and on the fact that soon after leaving that place the conditions of my service career were for many years greatly changed, and I was stationed—which was just as well under the circumstances—far from the jungle and its compelling and jealous call.

There was one terrible hot-weather during which, all within half a day's ride of our little thatched home on the hill, I ought to

have bagged no fewer than six tigers. I actually saw eight. An unusually evil genius seemed to dog me—at no time a favourite of the Indian Diana—resulting in that devastating sensation that one is, to all intents and purposes, firing blank cartridge! True, I had been scragged by a bear the previous year—(about which a little song and dance has been done elsewhere)—but was doing well with other game; my particular ju-ju seemed to be tigers only. Poor Abbas Khan, I know, did his best on the sly with amulets, potent transcripted verses of the Qurán, and what not; but had to give up and fall piously back on *nassíb* and *kazza* (luck and fate) words that I grew positively to loathe.

The mysterious affliction was uplifted from me on the practically suicidal demise of a tigress, and I am thankful to say without return—save for a few days, many years later, in an African coast-belt, when the same disconcerting "blank ammunition" was again served out; and when, after the manner of Caspar in *Der Freischütz*, I would willingly have bartered my soul to Zamiel or any local Beelzebub for a like purpose.

Of small game shooting there was little in the Mélghát hills. Pea-fowl, jungle-fowl, and spur-fowl usually turned up in a general beat—in which, of course, it behoved one to have a heavy rifle handy or to use a ball-and-shot gun. The jungle-fowl of that part of India is the grey (*G. sonneratii*) of which the cock's hackles were once largely used for tying salmon-flies. He is a bird for which, together with the peacock, I have memories. His crow is very distinctive and poignantly recalls many a haunting Indian woodland. Often preceded by a long-drawn "Wheeeeew!" it consists of four syllables —"Kuck-káya-kya-kuck'm." Or whisper under the breath—"I'll fi-ght t'll I whack'm." For the call of the red jungle-cock (*G. gallus*) omit the fourth double-syllable.

Both species are very wary, but less so than pea-fowl—or curlews on a much-gunned estuary, which I bracket first in wile. I rather think that the black-and-white Indian hornbill, or "toucán" (one of the crow family) is a good second.

To make jungle-fowl fly well in a beat is an art ; as with certain pheasants. Standing behind a tree, I have seen them come skimming along from the beaters, drop in a bed of dry leaves, and shake quickly down into it until only the beak is visible. Last year I saw a hen-pheasant do precisely the same thing within three paces of my stance.

Very few " old Indian Colonels " of the present day (1928), or perhaps I should say few who have served in India until five or six years ago, have the slightest desire to return to the East ; but I personally make exception in the case of the Satpuras (in the cold-weather) and Kashmir. In my younger days the keen pursuit of game not at all easy to come by interfered almost entirely with drawing and photography. There are many other parts of the world overseas that attract me more, but I visualise one happy sexagenarian way of escaping our home winter :

A roomy, four-seated car suited to forest roads and cross-country tracks, followed by a light lorry of the same make.

A gifted landscape and animal artist, of whose style I approve, and who will do what I tell him !

Return passage to Bombay. Rail to Amraoti, Itsari, or Jubbulpore. Abbas Khan, and two Abdul Ghani-s (my old butler-cook-general, still going strong). Completely self-contained and independent camp equipage and commissariat. Best photographic outfit procurable. Another ·350. A couple of well-trained troop-horses " cast " for blemish only. One of Bódráj's hog-spears in my hand again, and—

Time to get those new rose-trees in before the frost ! !

In the recital of shikar episodes there is likely to be a certain monotony, and as, later on, I shall recount the more interesting story of my best sambar and one of his undoubted grandsons, I do not now propose to dwell much further on this species of deer. However, as an instance of jungle happenings that perhaps rather upset hard-and-fast rules as to their rutting season, I may be forgiven for a few words about a good stag on the western slopes of Gáwalgarh Fort.

Once again I awaited dawn on the verge of the plateau, and then, spying, slowly descended the spur down to the Panchba Khola. Beyond that ravine rises an east-and-west ridge that at its junction with the flank of the Fort hill is crossed by Wellington's track.

On reaching a point half-way down my spur I spotted a very dark stag. He was about mid-way up that ridge and some thousand yards off ; and I sat and watched him through the glasses for a long half-hour, as he moved about quietly and presently worked his way along the contour, eastward. That is a very precipitous hill-face, covered with close-set sálé, thickets like tight pheasant-coverts in winter, long grass, and rocks ; and for considerable periods of time the stag disappeared from view.

Finally, he appeared in a little clear space, and, to my surprise in more ways than one, among three or four hinds and one or two young beasts, some lying down, some standing about, which had hitherto escaped the field of my glasses. Here the whole lot appeared inclined to remain ; so, waiting nearly an hour longer, to let the sun get well up, and give the deer time to settle down, I worked out my plan of approach.

My orderly was away, and with me I had only one Korku —a sharp youth ; in fact, I had come out only for a short prowl, four or five miles before breakfast.

In stalking sambar, which are seldom found in easy ground, and where, owing to the noisy nature of the going, one does far better to work alone, it is worth while first to post your men so that they may watch both the game and you, and be prepared to signal any considerable move that it may make while you are working your way in. That is, I dare say, a counsel of perfection (and I never had any use for " arm-chair " theory) but it is worth trying. Anything, for instance, might cause that stag to move while far out of your ken, and you would then stalk a vacancy, blunder right on top of his new position, or otherwise bungle it. To-day my idea was that when I got across the ravines and tangles and some way up the slopes on which the deer had been located, and thus in

view of my Korku, I should halt, turn, and extend my arm—as a query. If the stag had not moved, the watcher was to wave his garment horizontally ("wash-out" signal). If it had moved, he was to signal the direction with his arm—I watching him through my glasses.

My first task was to reach the bottom of that great cleft by a route concealed from the opposite hill that stared straight at me; not nearly so easy as following down my spur. After that, half a mile of dry boulder-strewn torrent bed, a *détour*, then to set about the cautiously silent climb; a fall and rise of some 800 feet each way. I chose to approach from below, partly on account of the signalling, partly because one can usually move more quietly up-hill than down. Briefly, I had at length arrived just under the curve of the slope below that grass-flat, congratulating myself on the silence of my advance, when a sudden "*eeónk!*" rang out about 150 yards off, on the far side of a cup-like gully.

Knowing from my sambar experiences, short as they were that this was the bell of a hind that suspected the sounds of my approach to be those of a prowling beast of prey, and that patience might result in the stag sharing her watchful curiosity and coming within range, I kept right down. The unseen hind never moved, and at intervals repeated her dubious, interrogative bark. Noting a good position under cover a little higher up, I crept towards it by fits and starts, practically immersed in the crackly fallen leaves and grass. Getting into a sitting posture, out of sight, by far the best for a steady shot, I could now hear occasional leaf-cracklings as the other deer betrayed their positions. I was now, evidently, right among the scattered lot of sambar, and a puzzled bell or two came from them now and then.

I must say that I was astonished that after all this disturbance the deer did not begin to move away; but their policy seemed to be that of "wait and see," and (remember the inodorous climate) the original hind seemed unable to tell her friends exactly what I was.

This situation dragged on tediously for a long time. Then

I heard a more pronounced rustling that, intermittently, seemed to be coming along the side of the cup from my left. The animal that made it had then apparently halted behind a tangle of dry jungle, whence, after a long silence, a sharp, trumpet-like "dhánk!" smote the air.

Again that leaf-crashing, and presently the shadowy outline of a large body showed passing behind the interstices of thinner stems and boughs. Then at last, where they opened out to a brief view of grass only, emerged the splendid fellow I wanted.

Out he came with the slow, impressive gait, the regal, measured step of his kind; yet taut, alert, swift in instant pause to listen; to pace—once, twice—his sharply-flexed forefoot momentarily poised; to halt again in his stride, with large, slow-turning ears. The bushy sambar tail characteristically cocked and protruded. The deep, powerful barrel and muscular, well-let-down hams. The rough, bristling appearance of him. The harsh ruff about his neck. And the horns—ye jungle gods!—the biggest I have yet seen: the weighty horns that tilt slightly back at each majestic, bowing pace.

I have often wondered how it is that India, cradle of so poor an indigenous race, so deleterious in her effect on the diluted Aryan blood that has from time to time crossed the Himalaya, has bred such robust animal types. Particularly do her tiger, gaur, wild dog, boar, and sambar stand out as the fiercest, strongest, hardiest of their species.

Consider the conditions under which the sambar thrives—the often poor and dry feeding, the terrific sun, and the burning "summer" heat, the harsh, hard, and often shadeless hills that are his home; and you may share some of my admiration for his strong, sturdy nature, and recognise him for what he is, the inseparable spirit of those central Indian hills.

I have recently missed two good stags, and the disturbing recollections make me twitch badly at the shot. But luck cannot always be out. This is certainly one of *my* mornings. This time the ·500 express bullet speeds true, at 150 yards, and the stag, rearing up a moment, falls on his side; then

OUT HE CAME

his heavy flaccid bulk rolls slowly over, and, gathering momentum, goes slithering and rolling down the steep, until it strikes a small tree, that bends and creaks at the impact, releasing a shower of brittle twigs on the inert frame.

Fearing for broken antlers in that rocky fall, I scrambled wildly down to the prize, shouting to my Korku lad afar, and venting my joy in a series of cat-calls. I had worked two months for this.

He had a very perfect and thick pair of horns, with ruggedly beaded beam and well-polished tips. A mature stag, perhaps a little past his prime, judging from his teeth. The bullet had struck close behind the point of the shoulder. The whole front of his body was hairless—scarred and furrowed by deep cuts, some of them recently inflicted and still suppurating. He was caked with dried mud, and, so records my diary, wore "a very *blasé*, hoary-ruffianly expression." Bodily he was not so large as others I had got, but his horns taped 39½ inches, and 7½ inches round the mid-beam. I wanted to get him home intact, as we were within half a mile of Wellington's road on which it would have been just possible to use a light bullock-cart; but might have saved myself the trouble of trying. A precipitous hillside and thirty-five to forty stone! Like most of his kind, he was broken up where he fell.

The date was January 11th; which close observers of these deer will note in relation to certain details indicated.

These reminiscences, hitherto pertaining for the most part to my visit to Chikalda on long leave from Aurangabad, now merge into the seven years that followed, after my regiment had moved to Ellichpur. During the whole of that period I remained continuously in India, well content with life in that country and never tiring of the sporting little place in which, except for manœuvres, specialist classes, and occasional visits to social centres as Bombay, Poona or Secunderabad, most of my time was spent. Indeed, what with two subsequent years at the Staff College and a visit to the Far East, I did not see England between 1897 and 1907.

Compared with the present day, our means of transport in my jungle years was primitive, but varied and effective. Most of us kept a couple of horses or polo ponies, round about fourteen hands, and a dogcart of sorts. Our permanent regimental transport provided us with ponies—Deccani " tattoos " of a useful type—that were trained to ride, and to drive in pairs in our regimental " tongas." Even the humble " push-bike " lent its aid.

I think, by the way, that I must have used about the very first bicycle seen in Western India—in 1891—judging by its effect on the then unsophisticated natives in the Bombay-Poona-Satara country.

Some good roads existed in the Satpuras and Berar, and I always had an up-to-date bike. I never had the luck to meet a tiger, leopard, or bear while biking about the Melghat forests ; but used to see lots of other game, and always carried a gun or rifle strapped to my machine. One can traverse quite narrow paths at a good rate of speed on a bicycle, even forest pathways in the " darkest " parts of Africa, where the " push-bike " has proved extraordinarily useful. One should not, however, forget the effect that it or its silent progress may produce on a primitive mind.

One late evening, riding home from the Gatang hills, I had lost my temper over a puncture and was pushing along recklessly and bitterly on the rim. " Lighting-up time " is not strictly observed in the depths of the jungle, and, as I came hurtling with a loud " clinketty-clank " round a corner of the lonesome forest road, a dusky figure loomed suddenly up in front, there was one horrified gasp, and the business end of a huge *láthi*, or iron-bound quarterstaff swept with a whizz just over my head ! Next moment, realising his error, or under the impression that he had just missed or been missed by the Great White Shouting Bhoot of Gatang, there was a crash in the roadside undergrowth and a dreadful sound—produced by yelling at the top of the voice while beating the open mouth with the palm of the hand.

Another little scene—on Sípna's banks when the sun is low.

A JUNGLE ROAD, COLD-WEATHER

Biking gently along from Kólkáz to Sémádhau by the old and beautiful valley road—not the later abomination—I approached the last river-crossing. The hill-sides were bathed in the sunset glow and over the shadowy river-bed there brooded an abiding peace. I happened to be overtaking two little jungle men who were toddling mutely homeward in front of me with great bundles of grass or firewood on their heads.

At the gently-shelving left bank, the track, soft with warm dust, turned slightly to cross the wide, dry shingly watercourse ; and the Korkus' bare toes had just begun delicately to negotiate the pebbles, when I arrived.

The bike's silent progress was suddenly arrested in a rattle of loose shingle just behind them, and simultaneously my dismounting feet landed in it with a crunch !

Both men collapsed !

Not a move ! Not a peep !

One of the bundles had fallen, and its owner had squatted down and shrunk quite small, with a hand holding tightly to each ear-lobe—an attitude that signifies " Lo ! I have sinned ; do with me as thou wilt ! " The other man, pressing low, like a hare in her form, seemed to be using his bundle *testudo*-wise !

This appeared to me a very wonderful and interesting little performance, so I trudged on, noisily dragging the bike, and stood curiously over the rearmost man.

Never have I seen a more extraordinary play of expression on a face human or simian. Fearfully, gradually, the eyes rose from my boots upwards and " registered " emotions that would have brought their owner a fortune at " Hollywood," or whatever the horrible place is called. " Reprieved at the rope's end ! " " So it *isn't* a bear ! " " For the Lord's sake don't tell the village," and " Ha, ha ! Only did it for fun ! " flitted in succession over the aboriginal's ingenuous lineaments. But, most visible of all, were a profusely perspiring relief, and, under a skinny breast-bone, the terrific wallopings of his heart.

The other man, who must have been trying to be a pebble, motionlessly awaited his doom, hands still to ears, not daring

to look round until I had reached the gasping and side-holding stage. What he had taken me for only he can tell. Does the Sipna harbour hooting tree-devils that greet their wretched prey with hideous and uncontrollable mirth ?

I used to do a good deal of exploring on horseback, seldom without a rifle. An Arab pony of mine stood fire very philosophically, and from time to time I shot a good many small things from his back, barking deer, etc. ; nor had he any great objection to their being put across the saddle afterwards. He was a wonderful hack in the jungle, off the roads and tracks, and took me over much of the hill-forest about the loftier Melghat ranges.

Carrying a gun or rifle in the hand when riding is rather a nuisance, and eventually I designed a simple and instantly detachable carrier that put the whole weight on the horse and left both hands free ; while, if one fell off, the weapon came along too. Small things sometimes alter life's course, and that little shikar device, although it was not finally taken up for cavalry, led to a great change in my service career.

It was about this time that I began to form a theory which subsequent experience served only to strengthen : that wild animals can be influenced by human mind-transference. I do not refer to the " power of the human eye," but to the undoubted effect produced by an intense concentration or keenness of mind, even when the outward senses of the hunted are unable to detect the hunter.

How often one hears such remarks as—" You'd have thought he *knew* I hadn't a gun," " You can't get near them when you *want* to ! "

The fact is that he *did* know one hadn't a gun, and they that one did not want to get near them—partly by the exercise of their outward senses, but also, and largely, *because the animal mind was in the negative and undisturbed condition of not receiving a message of hostile intent.* I do not mean that while so " negative " a wild animal is likely to allow a recognised suspect to approach it too closely. It will observe a certain limit, according to its experience, to the warnings of

its companions or of other creatures, or to the quality of shyness inherent in its species. But it will not be nearly so distrustful as when it experiences a sensation of intent hostility.

This theory, originating in some idle thought, gradually impressed itself as my jungle education proceeded and I pondered over occurrences, chiefly failures, for which I found it difficult to adduce other reason. What I consider a master key was then provided by the chance remark of a friend: "You're *too* keen." Although this led to my taking more advantage of opportunities for observation, so stubborn are a young man's self-opinionated views that it was years before the key was put to practical use.

Even for such simple manifestations of thought-power—and my belief goes a very short way in psychological matters—it is obvious that conditions must be sympathetic. This may not often be the case. On the human side there may be insufficient intensity of purpose; while the "receptivity" of the animal—should it have any—may be unfavourable, temporarily or permanently, for a number of reasons.

Some animals and birds appear to be more "psychic" than others; and I have also noticed that numbers are more generally receptive than are individuals. Pig, spotted deer, ibex, and nilgae—also leopards—seemed to me the more susceptible of Indian animals; and, if anachronous or premature reference be here permitted, my short but varied experience of African game suggests waterbuck and impálá as equally high up on the "psychic" list.

Old hunters will probably laugh at these ideas—as I often do myself—and may point out that these animals possess particularly acute outward senses that would sufficiently account for my fancies, while suggesting that I could not have been paying sufficient attention to the direction of the wind and other details. In self-defence I will remind them of the undoubted mind-relationship between man and domestic animals—particularly dogs.

A curious fact is that most herd-animals—not excluding man—close up or bunch together when suspicious of danger.

Is this wholly due to a feeling of "union is strength" and "comfort in company," or is it Nature's design to bring the separate entities into closer physical contact for the purpose of increasing mental co-ordination? How about crowd-psychology?

Before the reader's thought-forms condense into "mesmerising monkeys in the Melghat" or "hypnotising hippos on the Hoogly" let me say that this rather nebulous hypothesis is founded for the most part on accidental occurrences, negative inferences. When, in stalking or awaiting the approach of some wary quarry, I curbed my too keen anxiety to add him to my little list, success seems more often to have waited on me than when the contrary was the case.

On occasions when some unaccountable message or warning did seem to pass, the preliminary actions of the creatures affected were seldom hasty or definite, they began by appearing puzzled and uneasy. But the result was practically always the same. They soon moved right away. They did not go in haste. But they went. The actual move was definite. They seemed undecided as to the exact direction of the mysterious warning, but stopped feeding or whatever they happened to be doing, and—this is significant—markedly without displaying any increased inquisitiveness of vision, hearing, or smell, simply "folded up their tents and silently stole away."

From these phenomena I gradually extracted the obvious moral—easier in breach than observance.

It is interesting to find that, in discussing tiger-beats, some other people give similar advice: to avoid watching a slowly approaching animal too intently, and even slightly to avert one's eyes until the moment arrives for the shot. But, in my opinion, this counsel is far more applicable in the case of a creature that has not yet been in any way disturbed; especially, for instance, when an "educated" and subtle-sensed feline is circumspectly returning to his kill.

I have given some descriptions elsewhere, about a generation ago, of our long years at Ellichpur, its situation close to the

foot of the far-stretching wall of the Satpuras, and its facilities for sport of various kinds ; and at first sight it seemed to me that anything that might now be written of those days could only be tiresome repetition. However, on reconsidering the matter, one sees that the narration of current events differs considerably from memoirs. In my case the former was rather meticulously compiled, sorted out from what, to a young man with the corner of his eye on more experienced people, seemed merely commonplace. In memoirs, that is to say, in retrospect, and probably a changed environment, such detail may become interesting.

In the old Hyderabad Contingent garrisons, some of which were as far as seventy or a hundred miles from the railway, our local leave rules were more generous than elsewhere. Our special allowance of fifteen days' " Station " leave could be extended to seventeen by getting leave to " sleep out " on the nights before and after the stipulated period. Similarly, " regimental " leave could be extended to five days. That allowed of fairly extensive little expeditions ; and if in the present day this amount of leave be considered ridiculous, it must be remembered that for officers of the Indian Army it afforded opportunity for acquiring valuable knowledge of the country and its inhabitants and language, together with healthy recreation, and some experience in movement, transport, supply, camp, and bivouac, also co-operation and comradeship with one's men, who accompanied one as shikar-orderlies.

Considering the increased gulf (brought about by modern conditions) between the bulk of Indians and British officials, it would be a good thing if those facilities for understanding each other were reintroduced. Such extended leave, however, should not be granted for " poodle-faking " or loafing in some hill-resort.

In addition to the Christian holidays there were the numerous Mussulman and Hindu festivals, not one of which was missed, to be sure, commanding as they did the hearty polytheistic reciprocity of all and sundry.

Finally, there were Sundays and Thursdays, the latter being the good old-fashioned "Europe day"; and the possibility of being able to respond to the occasional urgent call of one's jungle scouts even on other days, or nights, when off duty.

So much for our opportunities with the game of the hills—the tigers, bears, panthers, sambar, other smaller creatures, even perhaps bison; while nearer at hand, in the lower and more open country and plains, were countless numbers of blackbuck and a good many *chinkára* (gazelles), *nílgae* (a big tragelaphine antelope, 4½ feet at the shoulder and although "sacred" and half-tame in Northern India very wary farther south), and, best of all, wild hog.

This mixture of wild country and big game with one's ordinary life, the possibility of being able to hunt on such a scale within an hour's ride of cantonments, thereafter returning to one's comfortable home, mess, and social amenities, was the great charm of Ellichpur. Even to the hottest enthusiast and although its "red-letter-days" were few, and many a day went blank, that sort of sport seemed more spontaneous, less business-like than the regular expedition when one worked more or less against precious time and on a settled plan.

The pursuit of larger game does not often blend with social gatherings, but the moderate amount of small game shooting in Berár made pleasant opportunities for that sort of thing, while pigsticking meets near cantonments were particularly suitable. Ladies often attended those, and some followed the proceedings on horseback; after which somebody—or else the mess—would be "at home" for breakfast-déjeuner, and we would all adjourn to some shady grove where (O land of *bandobast* and good servants!) we would find seats at a well-appointed table with no stint of refreshment and good cheer before driving or hacking back to the station.

Indian "Christmas camps" too, are particularly delightful memories, and in favourable localities it was possible to mix both big and small game shooting with the pleasantest of company of both sexes. At that season camp life in the

AT THE SOILING POOL

LALLU'S SÁMBAR ARE ALL HUGE!

central parts of India is ideal. Large, comfortable canvas bedrooms and bathrooms, dining-tent, lounge, and luxurious cuisine were by no means expensive or difficult to organise. Perfect tree-shade; brilliant cool days; wonderful star-spangled or moonlit nights round a huge camp fire. A house-party in Arcady!

Cutting out the element of sheer luck, which is—to the unlucky—too large a feature of big game shikar, much patient philosophy and endeavour were required to make a success of the better Ellichpur sport. "Flaneurs" soon discovered that it "wasn't worth it"; others that it "put them off their golf." All the better for those who knew the value of a day in the hills!

One late evening, while superintending the skinning of a stag on a hill-top eight miles from and 1,800 feet above Ellichpur, came a sudden recollection that I had been "detailed" for a dinner-party at eight-fifteen, and a growing conviction that it was to be at my own house! A horrified glance at the declining sun, another at my wrist-watch, and I was off.

After more than an hour along mountain paths at the *pas de Bersaglieri* and some blazingly warm clambering, the result of an injudicious short cut, I thankfully ambled into the foot-hill village to which my syce had been ordered to take my horse. A "half-day excursion" that had lengthened to a whole one under a March sun, and then this little evening effort —sustained solely by anticipations of a restful tittup home— was not at all a good preparation for silence in seven languages when I discovered that my horse was not there! However ("breath! . . . porridge!"), grabbing a smoky oil lantern from the village head-man, I dogged off bitterly on the final lap. I see that the last 4½ miles, over a roughish track but slightly downhill, were covered in less than thirty-five minutes. Just as the eight o'clock bugle went I trotted sweatily, shouting "Qui-hye!" and tearing off my clothes, into my bungalow, leapt into my hot tub, and, thanks to the wonderful deftness

of my servant, stood ready at the appointed hour, white choker and all, an exceedingly comforting wine-glass—" Thanks, yes *one* more ! "—in hand.

If one had a choice there is little doubt that the middle and latter part of the cold-weather—after the leaves and grass are somewhat thinned—is the time when one would go tiger-shooting in Central India. That is, however, a busy season for soldiers, whose longer leave does not open until the beginning of the hot-weather. Our distant expeditions were accordingly made in March-May. Sambar, swamp deer, and barking deer are then practically all hornless, but all other jungle game is shootable and perhaps more easily located especially *chital* (spotted deer) which are very gregarious and must have water and shade as well as fairly level country.

As the years rolled on and experience accumulated, I gradually found that, for me, big game shikar was better conducted alone.

My old Abbas Khan always held decided views on the subject, and never tired of telling me that in company the luck would never be mine, but go always elsewhere. Lone luck, however, was my birthright, he insisted, and would be found prescribed (what is written is written) in the involute script of the sutures of my skull. Time, I must admit, proved him right, on the whole, as regards results.

Besides, the collective element is foreign to the best side of big game shikar, a more individual affair. Collectiveness introduces competition—which in its turn may breed rivalry and finally degenerate into simian ethics.

" Choose your shikar companion " is the obvious retort and may suit those who go to the jungle to collect " trophies," sample a novel experience, or because it is " one of the things to do," a variation of the " grand tour," with chippings of the Vatican, Coliseum, etc., for subsequent display.

The fact is that the rare attraction of the wild, that outlives the earlier, cruder desire to achieve or to slay, vanishes utterly at the first sign of restless, possessive strivings. It is precisely this scrambling rivalry that can spoil sport ; and if a money

or other unworthy interest be added—good-bye to its last vestige.

Yet I doubt whether I should have begun to forgo all companionship in big game hunting, comradeship of some kindred spirit with whom generously to share the ups and downs, if the vicissitudes of service had not sent us old shikar cronies in different directions, and failed to provide others in their place.

And even in youthful days I often hunted alone. Gregarious spirits might shake their heads over distant and lonely wanderings . . . all by oneself . . . nobody to talk to . . . what if one fell ill . . . or got out and got under some wild beast! Well, all that, and some more, has happened, yet are we the more established in our "uncongregationalism." "Old shikaris don't care."

Long-range retrospect, as that three-score-and-ten limit looms a little nearer, is liable to stir some amusement, a little indulgent humour. "Youth will be served" is a misnomer—rather is it "Youth will serve itself" . . . and, until that be done, advice and young men are as oil and water, the world's wisdom but lies. Other people may have been scragged by wild animals. . . . Well, they must have done the wrong thing. . . . Oh for the opportunity that was theirs! Thus care-free youth . . . that will eagerly plug that coveted thing, a tiger, *in the stern*, and then, joyfully advancing to meet the resultant typhoon of flying leaves, claws, fangs, and brindled thunderbolts, snuff it all out with that most egregious of flukes—a snapshot that—by the grace of Pándardévi and little green mangoes—happens to pass through gaping palate to brain. And that with no further mental reservation than—"Lucky we got him to charge!" . . . Generous youth, that will stuff its head into a cave when it well knows the owner is at home, shouting "Yoicks! Come out of it, you old!"—at least that is what the native shikaris had to say!

Fortunate indeed for such irresponsibilities if the cherub that sits aloft—or some tutelary eastern avatar—should decree that the necessary lesson, though sharp, should leave

no irreparable hurt. In my own case the worst was the exceedingly annoying after-effect, the reflex nerve-action that persisted for some little time. For instance, six months subsequent to a certain event that left a hole in my leg, I was standing by a roadside, awaiting change of *dák*-ponies, when a native one-man one-beast circus, approaching unperceived, produced the characteristic "gurgle-whoof" of *melursus ursinus* just behind my back! . . . and precisely the same effect was to be observed on those joyous old leave-boats about to clear from Boulogne, when the skipper suddenly pulled his siren—the man who didn't duck had not been far from the Base.

More tigers are shot in beats than by other methods. As such are conducted on the same general principles as beats for pheasants or any other game, and as I have already mentioned treatises dealing with the minutiæ of the art, and also described a night-vigil for the king of the jungle, I will now confine myself to an unconventional episode or two, the less stereotyped details of which seem to be more vividly impressed on memory.

The jungle man, whose mode of living takes him into the wild at most hours of day and dusk, and likewise but to lesser extent the oft-prowling sportsman, is bound from time to time to surprise even such wary creatures as tigers and leopards; and while to the native such chance encounters are unpleasing (though very seldom dangerous) to the latter they are often the most interesting of all. There is great satisfaction, and a sense of rightful dues for past effort, in putting up Stripes or Spots "with one's foot" and bowling him over like a quail!

One sultry morning, after spending the night in a tree, and, by the way, watching a half-grown tiger stalk, reach, but finally funk my live-bait, I was strolling home through some lovely chital ground, and took the opportunity of locating a water-hole that I wished to examine. . . . Even the local man seemed to be puzzled in that woodland, which was very flat, extraordinarily all alike, and devoid of landmark or prominent feature; so, not wishing to disturb the jungle unnecessarily, I

sent him off to search alone and sat down to await results. He returned, having found the water, and we set off together. Presently we were traversing a large open space dotted with occasional bushes, and were passing one of those when there was a series of deep grunts and a beautiful tiger leaped out and, shining black and gold in the early sunlight, cantered easily, right across my front, about the length of a cricket-pitch away. My guide had twice unconsciously passed his lair, but this the third visit had finally flushed him!

Instant action one way or the other is the first law of the jungle, and for this the people who for one reason or another have visualised various possibilities are the better "instinctively" prepared. Instinct now ticked off present conditions as a bit risky; but recent ill-luck and this precious opportunity easily overruled all. The tiger had passed us, his head pointed well away. My ·303 cracked. The great brute turned a somersault. Another bush intervened. My orderly was able to see a brindled shape make off slowly, as if *bé-hósh* (without sense); and my late guide was nowhere to be seen!

A troublesome situation had now arisen. The silence with which the shot had been received was significant. But so was the dense waist-high grass . . . and the utter absence of serviceable trees or any other conning tower. We lingered —but there was nothing to linger for. Very properly, though unwillingly, slowly, we went away.

It was late that afternoon before we were able to collect some fifteen water-buffaloes from a distant village, and bring them to the scene of action. These ponderous creatures were then driven slowly through the grass ("Take care, sahib! Don't go too near that old cow!") in their recognised rôle of smelling-out, rousing and confronting a wounded feline, which may then be further dealt with. To-day, however, nothing seemed to happen. True, there was a little flurry of tails and snorts just at first ("only the smell of blood, sahib!") then the irregular line of large slaty bodies in pale yellow grass roamed on, quite unconcernedly, for nearly half a mile—when a halt was called.

At last, having come to the conclusion that we must either have overrun the tiger or that he had got clear away, Abbas Khan and I got into our saddles, and, hogspear in hand, rode back and quartered the ground towards the scene of the morning, trotting quickly backwards and forwards through the grass. And there, just where the buffs had "played up" we found him! Not thirty paces he lay from where, unfortunately but wisely, we had turned back! Ah! those "ifs." He must have died almost immediately, for the little bullet had struck fair in the centre of the great neck.

Alas, the skin was irretrievably ruined. Full-exposed to that terrible May sun, the fat had run; and already the hair was slipping. Later, in the curer's hands, the pelt simply fell to bits.

Once more—by the bonny bonny banks of Pén-Ganga—and instancing that "lone luck" prescribed of my bigoted old Abbas, proof-positive of the writing along my skull-sutures. The kill in a rocky tributary, five miles away. A tiger at dawn that had unfortunately been disturbed near his prey, leaving very large square tracks. And the nullah itself, viewed from the opposite and higher big river bank, quite small, not two miles long, winding through open bush country, a greenish swathe of thin covert wandering away towards, but not connected with, distant low hills.

Tepid splashings through the wide, sandy ford. A little row of nearly naked waiting beaters squatted in the purple shadow of a sheer red bank. Presently, a tittup round on the old mare—keeping well out from the neighbourhood of the covert—to get the lie of this delightfully simple holt, my first experience of the northern *Moghlai*, by a long, long way the most easily worked of all and every tiger-country; and, at one time, I believe, quite the most heavily stocked.

Considering the hour at which the tiger had left the kill, of which he had eaten very largely indeed, it was simply a question of how far up this short nullah he had managed to go. And it was not long before this was settled, by "cutting"

the dry watercourse about half a mile " upstream " where it became soft and sandy; when it was noted that no fresh tracks had passed—although there were some old ones of apparently the same animal that led right away across the open, and must have been made at night.

Planning and arranging this little beat—and the shikari who does so himself reaps the *whole* of the fun—I went away down towards the big river again, put the finishing touches to my job of work, and returned alone by a detour to my chosen post

Not a single stop was required. No tiger would break away in the heat of midday over practically bare plain, with a few stunted bushes, that led nowhere. Nevertheless, a look-out man a couple of hundred yards out to the west, and my syce with the mare and a couple of hogspears in similar position eastward were sufficient indication of my intentions—crazy young ass—for, if he *had* gone away over the open, I was going to create a record by being *the first man to ride and spear a tiger!* Which shows how of one thing I was perfectly certain—that my mare would take me up to anything on earth.

I must say that, in spite of the signs, I was most sceptical of the tiger being there at all, feeling sure that, having been alarmed by the fool who had blundered in on him by his kill, he would never—in the cool of dawn—have stopped before reaching the better cover and shade nearer the hills. Yet we could not afford to leave any possible harbour unsearched. The first beat therefore was to be a slow, silent, tap-tapping one.

And now, from my position on the bank, behind some bushes, I could gather faint indications of its approach.

On the opposite side of the nullah there was a bit of cover that I could not, without giving up my present and generally better post, adequately control. It was about forty yards by twenty, a patch of bush and creeper tangle, some nine feet high, and might at a pinch have served to shelter a peacock, or a jungle-fowl or two. It lay along and came right up to the level top of the bank of the sandy watercourse, the

latter being about seven yards wide with little perpendicular banks chest-high.

As I sat there, it seemed as though I heard a light leaf-crackle, as if a ground-squirrel was hopping inside this covert, and a little later, though my attention was necessarily fixed on the ground between the beat and myself, I saw, out of the corner of my eye, some slight movement in the same place. This worried me, it being a bad moment to change position; yet I knew it unwise to neglect the smallest possible sign. Presently, there was a heavier, slow leaf-crushing; and at that I hesitated no longer. Never dreaming that a tiger could be in that little patch, yet with the instinct to guard the far end of it, get it between the beat and myself, I dropped into the nullah and sneaked softly up its silent bed. The top of the little bank was level with my bent head, and glancing over it into the undergrowth as I passed along, my eyes fell suddenly on a great striped face!

Having sighted each other simultaneously, we both stopped dead; our bodies parallel but face turned to face at a distance of eight paces, my rifle at the "trail."

I remember the neat way in which one fore-paw was raised off the ground; the large, yellow eyes staring a moment into mine with a rather foolish, interested, inquiring expression. Then down went his head, close to the ground, his ears were pressed tightly back, and the muscles of the jaw drew his glistening lips back into an extraordinary expression as if he was going to be sick, reminding me of the ridiculous, threatful "mowings" of a captive monkey. Meanwhile he drew a sort of shuddering breath.

In an instant I had stepped back, rifle ready, keeping an eye on him until out of sight. Then, as if impelled from a catapult, I was on top of the far bank behind some sapling trunks.

Here, indeed, was the value of my appetite for shikar books, thirst for jungle information. . . . "Unless well out of reach, never unnecessarily fire at a dangerous animal looking at you. Wait till his head and body point the other way!"

Anyway, I was now out of sight, and, looking quickly about, moved quietly to another position, also behind good stout stems, but affording clearer command of the ground. The beaters were getting nearer, I could see one of my young sepoys on the bank some seventy yards off . . . and his watchful eye soon picked me up with my furious pantomime, my mutely urgent pointings and signals. . . . Ah! He has stopped the beat! It has now nearly surrounded the covert, and the dead silence shows how close the tiger is lying. Standing there at the ready, safety-catch off, waiting, watching, there comes a slight sound behind me—it is the same bright lad, crawling up " for orders "!

Good work. But unnecessary; and it is a relief when he disappears.

Now he is back with the others, and two of them cross the nullah to the beaters on the opposite bank . . . that's right . . . they're getting round that side of the covert. . . .

Suddenly a terrific chorus of yells breaks the burning noontide silence. A heavy rush is heard inside the brushwood. A moment later a weighty yellow body, full of buffalo, lobs into the nullah bed and comes at a ponderous, lumbering canter straight for my post. Three or four paces to my right is a small tributary drain that affords a rampway up the bank, and for this he swerves, avoiding also my shield of thickety stems—the great, bloated, pale-coloured cattle-slayer.

Powerfully the huge shoulders work as he heaves himself up and launches disgustedly away over the coppiced level.

As he comes, as he is in the act of passing me, every sense seems to shout " Wait—wait—wait! " exactly as when a duck hurtles over, and one swings, turning, to get him in reverse, with, and not against the air-pressed feathers. Then, just as most of the mighty brute has passed, and his tail is level with me, passing, almost within singeing distance, so close is he, right down on top of his shoulder I fire.

Instantly the great body seems to fold up concertina-wise,

down flops his head, down and under, back go the huge arms as the forequarters hurl to earth, a thick tail flings upward, and all the rest of him appears to crumple and pile up into the collapsed shoulders.

My hand had dashed the ·303 bolt back and up again. The muzzle is covering a heaving striped mass that seems pinned to the ground, unable to rise. Then, as the head jerks up in convulsive movement, the little rifle speaks again . . . the whole body of him sags over to the other side . . . and the bulky limbs flaccidly relax. . . .

What does one shout on such glorious occasions? Anyway, a whoop of joy brings my own men, peering and watchful, followed cautiously by the bolder of the beaters; and soon everybody is crowding round, a tumult of eager eyes, wide grins, chatterings, laughter, salutes, and salaamings. As I bend over the splendid prize, there rises fragmentary argument, several voices at once . . . "here, here it was, I tell you; and the *shér* passed there . . . see his track!" "*Arré Báp!*"—head-shaking consensus of disapproval. "*Oh-hó! Chár kadam!* (four paces) *Oh-hó. Barra bhári shér. Wah-wah! Oh-hó!*"

The queer-tempered bear of jungle India, Christian name "Sloth"—which, by the way, is an absolute misnomer—is responsible for some unpleasant misunderstandings; particularly on moonlight nights, it seems, when the echo of his sudden brawlings, petulant outbursts, and occasional shouts of "Police!" travel afar.

Often have I pondered on the mentality of those generous souls the zoologists, and striven to connect with common reason some of the scientific nomenclature they have bestowed on the animal creation. *Melursus ursinus* is the latest result of their lucubrations anent our shaggy, black, "drunken sailor" of the Indian woodland; and that is really not so bad, for the zoologists, for, apparently, it signifies "bearish honey-bear." But those who know him better would certainly

vork in something about *hysterico-vociferatus*. Mr. Bhálú, Reench, or " Oswald " as he is called in the Maratha country, ındoubtedly labours under an unenviable egocentricity, and vhen he feels riled—which is pretty often—attributes all his vorries to the nearest animate object. I have seen one or wo old gentlemen sitting in bay windows who look like that ; ɔut the only such human Bhálú that I have known to bear ɔut appearances by action is a certain convivial, red-faced, ɔpen-handed soul, who, finding that somebody had laid a ly-paper on his cranium during the after-lunch hour, bounced rom his chair and slogged the nearest, and perfectly innocent nember !

Oswald, too, lives largely by suction—aerodynamic, not ıydro-. He has a strong breath, has Oswald, and when he ligs out a termite's nest he sucks in the swarming insects by ɔowerful inhalations. Throw food to a not-too-domesticated :aptive sloth-bear, and see how simply he puts his muzzle ɔver it—and it flies mysteriously into his mouth. He has ɔther queer ways, such as sucking his paws forcibly while ıumming a tune—which is possibly his method of keeping his ɣacuum-cleaner up to concert pitch.

It is advisable to keep one's eyes skinned when wayfaring n Oswaldish localities, as I found one hot morning at the eason when the mhowa-trees are dropping their sticky-sweet *orollas*. In front of us rose one of those small solitary table-opped hills on which one nearly always finds the masonry emains of an ancient stronghold, relic of more stirring times vhen every man's hand was against his neighbour, or else built s a refuge from marauding Pindari bands.

My diary tells me that I was following the tracks of a pair f tigers, of which one then led straight to the foot of the ill, " the kind of place I've been looking for ever since I ame to this country—a typical, game-holding spot." Send-ng two or three men round the base of the hill to mark any nimal that might sneak away off the far side, we ascended, nd shortly found tiger tracks near the top. Some old walls ollowed the well-defined scarp that ran along the crest-line,

and we proceeded cautiously to search the fairly extensive cover of thorn-bush and large blocks of sandstone on the shadier side.

I was in front, near the edge of the scarp, and behind were my orderly and two other men, one of them a local Rájpút, a much bewhiskered person, with a henna-coloured turban-end tied ferociously round his black-bearded jaws, curled mustachios, and a yet curlier *talwár*, or scimitar, in a pink plush scabbard stuck in his *kamarband*.

There suddenly burst out a frightful uproar just behind me! Whipping round, my thoughts full of tiger, an extraordinary scene met my gaze. A large "sloth" bear, bellowing with rage, was standing nearly upright before the Rajput, who, *minus* his turban, stood on a rock, struggling to loose the string with which he had tied sword-hilt to scabbard. Abbas Khan had fallen between two boulders, and, with an expression of utter amazement, was gazing up into the bear's face. The local man was well up a tall tree.

Just as the scimitar came unstuck and began—"One, two"—its ridiculous, theatrical swipes (one straight prod is worth a hundred such), I got clear of the hurly-burly, and the bear fell sideways, bawling yet louder, with a broken forearm. Next moment he was over the edge of the scarp, followed by another bullet that elicited still angrier maledictions.

Rushing to the brink of the cliff, I heard the brute crashing incontinently down-hill, and presently, to my surprise, he emerged in the little plain about 200 feet below, trundling along at an astonishing pace. My second shot with the ·303 very luckily turned him over, and to such effect that he had time for only two bars of his "Dead March" in *Saul*.

The usual jabbering and laughter now had free rein, my orderly coming in for a lot of chaff—until it was found that he had dented my gun-barrels. After that we reconstructed the performance, and found that this particularly cantankerous *reench* had come up out of a sort of cave, fifty yards down-hill, in order to turn us off the premises. I am inclined to think that the smell of the tiger we were after—and, as it turned

out, a long way after—must have got on his nerves, Oswald's nose being far keener than his sense of humour.

The wariness of *felis pardus* is proverbial; but some of the exceptions that prove the rule fell to my lot from time to time. After all, like men, animals cannot always be at the "top of their form," and if such lapses should occur at unfortunate junctures . . .

That, possibly, was the explanation of my success one blazing day when I saw a large panther leap into a deep watercourse floored with soft red sand, and, following him craftily for about a quarter of a mile, peered round yet another corner—to find him lying just in front of me, panting in the shade, and "dead" him before he knew what had happened.

After taking my chances for years with the usual methods of sitting up for those animals, I bethought me of another plan; and, whether it was an original idea or not, my great regret was that I had not thought of it until my seven jungle years were all but numbered.

Experience had familiarised me with the marvellously acute eyesight and hearing of the big cats—particularly, it seems, the spotted ones—while I had found their sense of smell to be little superior to that of man. Experimenting at intervals as circumstances permitted, I came to the conclusion that in a fairly good light the leopard is able to detect—but apparently not to identify—so small a movement as the winking of the human eyelid, as far distant as about thirty yards. As for hearing, I have known the attention of these beasts arrested at twenty-five feet or so by the mere sound of swallowing.

Realising how these delicate senses work together, corroborating each other—faculties that enable him occasionally to surprise that marvel of watchfulness, the wild peacock—can one wonder at one's "mysterious" failures to get the better of Spots—or Stripes? As for cat intelligence, watch your "domesticated" puss lying lazily about in the spring sunshine, and see the instant action when she hears a sparrow-fight—

and knows that at least two of these otherwise too alert bird are about to fall to earth, clinched and blinded with passion

If you want to fool the sneakiest felines that ever crept, t gloat over their wonderful ways, with their prey—and wit each other—watching them almost within arm's length, i can be done from a roofed rifle-pit. Dig a hole of such dimen sions as will give you comfortable leg-and-elbow room whe seated in it, and bring your chin level with the ground-line Place large stones or similar supports, a little bigger (higher than your head, round the edge of the hole, leaving a loophol where you want it—and a peep-hole or two elsewhere if desir able. Put close-set poles or other suitable raftering acros the stones. Close their interstices with grass, leaves, matting anything like that, and throw earth over all. Camouflage t taste.

Opposite the loophole dig a sloped " ramp " by which yo can enter the pit feet first. Your men can later block thi entrance with a thorn-bush, or, better, some sort of " lid " with more earth on top. A convenient distance for the liv or dead bait is five paces.

Your view is a restricted one, confined to the sector radiat ing from your loophole—and peep-holes if any ; but in man other ways a pit is preferable to a machan. Limbs may freel be moved ; one may eat, protect oneself from mosquitoes, o scratch, make notes, manipulate camera or small " ciné," etc all unseen, and, sound being smothered, all but unheard Another but far less important point is the deodorant propert of freshly-dug soil. Fen-men rub earth over themselve before working their duck decoy " pipes."

Obviously there are conditions that suit the pit and othe that suggest the machan ; while each has its limitations Open ground is evidently about the best for a pit ; and whe the low roof blends inconspicuously into plough or fallow th most suspicious of cats will throw all caution to the winds.

If one is quick enough, the live-bait may be saved ; eve after it has been seized : for the first clutch of the prey i often effected quite lightly, exactly as a domestic cat wi

A KÓRKU VILLAGE

capture a bird or mouse, waiting, or even playing with it, practically uninjured, before the decisive crunch.

Illustrative of the efficacy of a pit in plough—I occupied such a position one evening, not far from a tiny jungle "village," and was much annoyed by the behaviour of a pariah dog that had been attracted by the delicious aroma of my exceedingly dead bait. Two eventualities were to be feared: firstly, leopards are very fond of dog, and if he for whom I was waiting were to get a hold of that "pi" he would bother no more about his old piece of goat; secondly, the pariah, with his sharp canine dog-nosis, might easily discover me, and by his subsequent proceedings convey unmistakable warning.

That wretched creature, glabrous with red mange, had scented the goat's remains from afar, and came sneaking nervously round in a wide circle, exercising the utmost caution—for he seemed to know quite a lot about leopards.

It must have taken him many jumpy minutes to cover each hundred yards, and I was getting rather cross, when at last he reappeared from behind me, and stood in close view of the left peep-hole, his hungry eyes ranging furtively from the forbidden fruit to the surrounding jungle. Longing for an air-gun, and momentarily expecting his sudden wheel to bay me with warning yelps, I saw him creep forward. Next moment he was standing just outside the main loophole, his blear eyes once more turned wistfully, fearfully, on the appetising carrion.

Suddenly an idea struck me. I leaned forward; I could have seized him by the leg; I put my face right into the loophole, within two feet of his leprous hide, and, in that dead silence, just as he raised a hind leg to scratch, uttered a low, bloodthirsty *"Wough-wough!"*

The result was eminently satisfactory. The unfortunate creature's mouth flew open to its widest extent and emitted an inarticulate choking shriek, his eyes seemed to shoot out of his head, his few remaining hairs stood on end, and he wilted hopelessly at all his joints. Next instant his legs were

working like scissor-blades, the hind far in advance of the fore, scrabbling up the ground in an ineffectual little hell of dust and gasps till, his clutch taking hold, he shot away and his " ki-yi-ing " faded into the distance.

The real pard turned up later.

The commanding view obtained from a machan will often influence one in its favour. The sky, the country-side, the changing aspects of the jungle at sunset, by moonlight, at sunrise, the watching of and listening to different forms of wild life near and far, cannot be enjoyed to the full from a hole in the ground. But, without knowing something of the one, it may be difficult to appreciate the other.

To mention either takes one back to many a quietly delightful hour, and memory reconstructs scene after scene in very different kinds of country. Even the predominant failures—failures in the actual slaying of the quarry one awaits, find their compensation in the number and variety of little interests in a region so full of life.

A remote little valley in the lower Melghat towards the Tapti Valley, and the one-man machan concealed in a tree well above its dry pebbly nullah—down which a panther is reported to roam every evening at dusk. We have been in hiding for an hour, and the jungle life, little disturbed by our stealthy arrival, has long since been going its natural way. Upstream, round the next bend, is a small pool, the only one in this branch or for a mile or two around—but devoid of a suitable tree. In that direction, as the sun declines, the interest of the little vale is centred. Creeping shapes of pea-fowl afar cross warily from dry grass to grey rock, with often an alertly raised, periscopic, green-crested head.

The dry teak-leaf carpet gently crackles and a small brown ground squirrel is there close below us, creeping, sudden tail-jerking, hopping, sitting up with paws to mouth. A brilliantly black-and-white *chashma bulbul*, or paradise flycatcher, his nearly yard-long pure white tail twirling and weaving in many an elegant whorl and convolution, executes his intricate

vanity-flights along the nullah-side trees, attended by his more sombre but richly chestnut-coloured relatives.

We have noticed a couple of head-bobbing monitor lizards that have run from some rocks to the stem of a sapling, where one remained awhile, distending a bright blue ruff, or collar. But something else now catches the eye, the ground squirrel squeaks rapidly and disappears, and a couple of jackals are seen quietly filing along, coming from the direction of the pool. They waste little time, seemingly bound for a distant rendezvous ; and we look down on their grey-brown backs as they half-slink, half-trot by. Suddenly, without checking his businesslike progress, the leader leaps lightly sideways, there is a sharp snap, and the lizard has gone.

In the fast yellowing light the low ridges on either hand stand out yet more richly russet purple and gold, rough and spiky in their bare twigginess, broken at rare intervals by some freshly-leafed evergreen or the bold crimson or chrome of bombax or cochlospermum, strewn with a litter of long, harsh withered grass. Up there echo the distant whoops of langúrs. Now the sun is dipping and blue shadows begin to creep across all.

As I sat there in the quiet of sunset there came, faintly, a peculiar reverberation from the jungle beyond the pool, and as I strained my ears for its possible repetition, a langur could be heard hoarsely cursing.

A few minutes later there sounded the unmistakable *tok-tok-tok* of pea-fowl from the same direction, but nearer. These discerning birds rarely utter their warning for aught but felines ; and at once I sat up, literally, and took particular notice.

It was not long after this that a fine big panther came round the corner and slowly down the nullah, keeping well under the bank. His course would take him about ten paces of the machan, and very slowly I began to get my ·400 into position. In so doing—and the wise shikari never *protrudes* the barrel through the leaf-screen—one leaf was shifted by the muzzle, and the panther, now about forty yards away,

stopped dead, and fixed his eyes straight on the spot. Dropping my eyelids and watching him anxiously through my lashes, I held the rifle, arrested, in a most uncomfortable, cramped position. Just as my arms had begun an involuntary twitching, he grudgingly lowered his gaze and moved on again with the soft, heavy, shoulder-bowing, undulatory walk of his glorious kind.

With meticulous care I now continued the raising of my weapon, and, seemingly, without making the slightest movement that could possibly be seen from the ground ; but again he halted abruptly, and those marvellous eyes stared intently upward.

This time, however, I was all but ready. And the instant he turned his head to resume his walk I got the butt home, aligned the sights on the junction of his muscular neck and shoulder, . . . and next moment he slept soundly with his fathers.

As the men had been told to wait a long way off, I descended, and, with difficulty dragging the heavy body to the foot of my tree, propped it up there, on a root, in a very lifelike, crouching position. I then climbed back and concealed myself. This little joke, however, fell rather flat. My old orderly never even smiled ; but, putting his foot on the dead *bórbacha*, reached up and waited patiently for me to hand down my rifle.

When shooting leopards by night I nearly always used my scatter-gun loaded with slugs of such a size that nine of them filled the shot space in a 12-gauge cartridge case, fitting it exactly in layers of three each. When loading such charge one should be careful to fill the interstices between the slugs with very small shot, say No. 10, so as to maintain the proper weight in front of the propellant : failing this a very weak shot is likely to result. Black powder did not necessitate this precaution.

Nine yards is about the maximum effective range for slugs of this size ; beyond that range they scatter too widely. At five or six yards, which is about the best distance for slugs

they usually group about the size of a tea-saucer; and I found that when fired from a ball-and-shot gun they "patterned" roughly in a little circle or ring.

Besides their advantage at night, slugs in a gun are the best proposition when looking up a wounded panther, and it is still better if your gun is of the ball-and-shot kind and you put a few ball cartridges in your pocket as well. If yours is an ordinary gun—but not choked—"lethal" bullets are effective, and fairly accurate.

If it is too dark to see the white card night-sight already described—or some similar device—then some form of artificial light must be used, and the more scientific form I shall discuss elsewhere; I may say, however, that many a leopard has been initiated to the secrets of Illuminism by means of the common or backyard hurricane lantern, placed so as to throw light on the occult surroundings in which his kind does its best work.

One evening, at dusk, a leopard had sneaked a goat close behind the servants' quarters of my bungalow in the hills, removed it to the shelter of a large mango-tree a little way down the woody hill-side, and made an excellent beginning before being disturbed by the lamentations of the bereaved owner. I got the news later. Taking a lantern with me, I adjusted it suitably on the branch of the mango, and, tying a string to the carcase of the goat, threw the other end over a bough and hung a small bell to it. A servant was then posted in the verandah and told to listen.

I was at dinner when Spots rang up. Taking some of the servants with me, we walked to the kill, talking loudly; I nipped up and sat on a branch; and they went away, still talking. In less than two minutes the leopard returned to resume his twice interrupted meal. And about three minutes later I followed his excellent example.

In looking back at my more jungly years I feel that there was so much that I did not follow up with regard to non-shikar interests, so many details about the people and the country

that I might well have studied, and so many opportunities for photography that I might have taken, and for sketching in colour. Even as regards shikar, in those long years we did not nearly exhaust the possibilities of the nearer Satpuras, great tracts of which we never even managed to explore. That may convey an idea of what India held—and will continue to hold—for people built that way; but for those not so constituted (I refer to my contemporaries and an era less restless than the present) such a life must have meant inexpressible boredom, and I cannot imagine how they came to choose it.

With regard to the above sins of omission to which I have pleaded guilty it must be remembered that Indian game requires some looking for, that its effective pursuit took up nearly all one's available time; and that photography, to be worth while, necessitated a fairly expensive outfit, and, in the tropics, development of negatives without delay.

Observation of wild life and the publication of its results improved considerably during the years I spent in the East; and latterly there has come under interesting discussion a curious cry that is said to be uttered by tigers at times, and which is described as a short, sharp note very similar to the "bell" of a sambar. This is testified to by more than one experienced observer. It never came under my notice, but, on reading about it, memory at once reverted to Christmas 1898 when I met a little Gónd shikari who imparted to me some unusual jungle lore. One day he brought me news of a sloth-bear, saying that he had "put it down" and that it would not dare to move for a long time. Asking him how he managed to mesmerise bears, he told me that, seeing the bear on a hill-side, he had got close to it and made the "leaf noise," on which the bear, according to ursine *dastúr*, or custom, promptly squatted motionless in the nearest cover.

Pondering on the efficacy of a noise like a turnip to attract rabbits (Allah be praised, those were the days before pheasants had turned to a diet of mangold-wurzels) I pressed the little man for further explanation; and presently he plucked a

firm green leaf of the *palás* (*Butea frondosa*, the *dhák* of Northern India) and, placing its stiff edge against his upper lip produced, with a sharp expulsion of breath through all but closed lips, a "ponk" like that of a sambar, though much weaker and more staccato.

The possible explanation is that Bápú's bear took the "leaf-noise" for this particular "toot" of a tiger, and the assumption that he then hid himself would lead one to infer that this "toot" has a definite significance for other and inferior jungle folk.

I found Russell's viper fairly common in the Melghat hills. This handsomely-marked snake is of a sluggish nature, and believed slow to bite: which is fortunate, for its poison fangs are unusually long, compared with which those of a cobra seem almost invisible. Blowing one in half with the shot-gun and examining its business end with the aid of a stout twig, I found that the fang easily penetrated the wood—as also a thick leather strap. I doubt that the stoutest boot or gaiter would keep it out. This viper has a very loud hiss, as loud as the release of air from a heavy motor-tyre valve, with a curious "boiling" quality in it. Dropping a treed peacock one day, the heavy bird fell in grass, and on going to gather it I was greeted by a tremendous hissing that seemed to come from underneath the bird. Catching sight of a very thick Russell, I was all agog to secure it without blowing it to pieces, but, although the ground was comparatively open, it miraculously disappeared.

I was responsible for a peculiar case of "towering" not long ago. The bird, a cock pheasant, turned over in mid-air —in fact seemed to "loop"—and, coming right side up again, remained suspended in the same spot for fully ten seconds, rapidly flapping his wings, head straight up and tail straight down, amid shouts of laughter from the beaters. He then fell dead, tail first. This reminded me of a towering black-buck in the long ago. Soon after separating from a friend with whom I was shooting in the Berar plain I heard a shot,

and, spying back with the glasses for the result, saw a buck going ceaselessly and steadily round in a circle till it suddenly fell dead and the sound of a second shot reached my ears. This animal had been hit in the head. It did not simply turn round and round, but walked, busily oblivious and at a great pace, in a circle of about six feet radius, for at least a minute.

On one of my early Satpura days I noticed a particularly beautiful green-velvety cluster of slender beans pendent from the tendrils of a straggling creeper. As my hand went out to it there was a gasp from my attendant Korku—but it was too late ! I had already gathered the beans, and was handling and admiring them. They are known as *kánch-kuri*, signifying splintered or ground glass; and set up an intolerable itching, caused by the fine, hair-like spines. I was in fact lucky, for mine were not yet ripe, and only the spines that I actually touched detached themselves. Not for about an hour, although I tried every available depilatory, did the irritation subside.

Not so fortunate was a friend of mine in years to follow. And a peculiar day that was, I well remember. We had " slept out " at the base of the hills in view of an early start, having sent out only camp-beds, chairs, and table.

Just before dawn an extraordinary *tufán* (typhoon) blew suddenly out of the hills, under a perfectly clear sky, and in a few minutes it had developed such hurricane violence as I have never elsewhere experienced. It forced us off our beds, and then rolled beds, bedding, rifles, and guns (which had been placed for the night along the notch of the X-pattern bed-legs) along the ground. One could not stand, and had to squat right down. As Abbas Khan said, " *Yih bilkul zulm hai !* "—this is sheer oppression ! All sorts of things were blown away for hundreds of yards and stuck on thorn-bushes. Even after the wind had somewhat abated—to fall, later, as suddenly as it had risen, to the dead calm of a cold-weather morning—our servants had to hold down our camp table, and we our sausages, some of which were blown off the plates.

And then the kanch-kuri!

We were driving a dense covert in the bed of a nullah, on the opposite side of which I could hear my companion "encouraging" the beaters, when a sudden silence fell, followed by very old English phraseology and other sounds that sent me hastening round to see what was the matter. I was under the impression that he had been bitten or stung by something, but on approaching the scene was puzzled to find him undressing with more haste than seemliness. A knot of jungle men stood near, and as I passed I caught the bisyllabic word that explained all.

Shouting for sappy green leaves with which to rub the sufferer, he was hurried into the shade, for the white man's tender body-skin burns very quickly in the tropical sun, with profuse and painful peeling thereafter. My friend had—and I trust still has—the very white cuticle that accompanies . . . well . . . warm-coloured hair, and now being, except for his boots, literally *in puris naturalibus*, and a well-developed man-of-parts withal, he attracted, and very deservedly too, no little meed of respectful attention; the awe of his many discreetly glancing admirers being voiced by one who, carried away by enthusiasm, wagged his head in deep appreciation, muttering, "*Oh-hó! Bahút khubsúrat jawán!*" (Oh, a very beautiful young man!) Even such flattering credentials are, however, small consolation for a poor devil who has blundered right into a mass of those dry, ripe beans of Hades, and released all over himself a veritable haze of their myriad torturing spiculæ.

Talking of gales, one would imagine that natural phenomena must be more severe in tropical countries; but in India, except for floods in the plains of the great rivers, some washaways during the monsoon, and a tendency to earthquakes and landslides in and about the new and still shaky Himalayas, it is seldom so.

Forest fires are frequent in the tinder-dry season, but, in spite of the accumulations of dry material, they cause little damage to man and his works, and are harmless in comparison

with the galloping conflagrations that one reads of in the pine regions of the "woolly West." Except perhaps in the Himalayas, thunderstorms are no more violent than in Europe. Sudden and exceptionally heavy rain in open country with a hard rocky surface of course produces local freshets of a violent nature.

One day I was following a wounded bear up the dry bed of a narrow glen that led, as is frequent in the horizontal rock-layers of the trap formation, into a deep cul-de-sac, over which hung a black, horseshoe-shaped cliff some five hundred feet high. The heads of such re-entrants of course form waterfalls, which in the rainless season are encrusted greyish-white with dry lime deposits. A very heavy, closely-concentrated thunder-storm had for some time been raging over the plateau that lies above those laterite cliffs, and, as we picked our way over the boulders of this stuffy ravine, a muffled rumble reached my ears, and a wondering exclamation from my orderly. Looking up, I saw a column of red water shoot over the lip of the cliff, breaking into sheets and festoons of yeasty spray in its perpendicular descent.

We were at least fifty yards distant from the foot of the waterfall, so merely moved out of the stream-bed and a little way up the bank, to watch. The volume of descending water soon enormously increased, the whole glen resounding to its booming roar. No "wall of water" came down the nullah —a sudden dam-burst is necessary for that, I suppose—but with an advanced guard of quickly-snaking muddy fingers, followed by a foot-high brown wave, the watercourse was rapidly filled; and in about a minute a pea-soupy torrent fully eight feet deep was racing past us, covered with spume, debris, broken branches, and a tossing log or two. In the midst of this a black object hove in sight, rising and sinking, and went wallowing past. Greeted with shouts of triumph, it rolled inertly onwards, stuck flaccidly athwart a tree, was washed off again, and, one hindleg lifting in a ludicrous adieu, disappeared round a bend.

He did not travel far, however, but stranded on a projecting

root. And there we found him, the flood having fallen to a mere trickle almost as quickly as it had risen.

The search for *chinkára* ("the sneezer"), or Indian gazelle, often leads one into quietly delightful country. Visualise 7 o'clock of a morning in the C.P. or Berar. The cold-weather sun, welcomely warm and as yet but a hand's-breadth above the horizon, has not yet dispelled the thin mists of dawn. After a hearty chota hazri, we have left our pleasant camping-ground with its white tents under the big drooping tamarinds, and bear away along the edge of the cultivated plain "that just divides the desert from the sown" and lifts gently into low foot-hills seamed with shallow, scrubby ravines—the favourite haunt of gazelle.

The sharp, cheerful cries of grey partridge—"*Tee-teetur, teetur, ka-teetur*"—resound from all sides, the swift-running cock birds seen now and again as they speed pugnaciously from bush to bush, while farther away, by the low thorny hillocks for which we are bound, rises the far-reaching call of the wild peacock. Beyond, glowing gold and purple, rise the woody buttresses of the higher hills.

Following a little field-path that threads some dew-soaked dwarf millet, we approach the base of the rising ground from which we shall begin to spy. A belated jackal lopes away over the sand of a small watercourse, turning for a moment to stare. Presently we leave our three followers, with orders to maintain distant touch of our movements, and proceed alone.

Ascending the highest knoll of the ridge, we creep up the last few feet, and, removing topi, let our eyes rise just over the crest. Nothing is to be seen. Looking back, we note the men duly seated at a discreet distance.

From cover of a bush the roving glasses search all likely ground within view. . . . Ah! A flicker of distant movement. It is the ever-twiddling black tail or white rump of a chinkára doe that is browsing below a little bank into which the rest of her shape subtly merges. And patient investiga-

tion suddenly reveals a pair of lyrate horns, behind a neighbouring bunch of thorn, shaken now by their lively little owner as he disperses the flies that annoy him.

Now for the approach. It will be better, this time, to get beyond and above the chinkara, and intercept their line for the bushier and more broken ground ; so, slipping back from our knoll, we begin a wide detour. Here is a nullah that lends itself to our purpose with its floor of soft silent sand.

All seems to go well, but when at last, sweaty and scratched, we peer slowly over and through interlacing thorn at the locality marked from afar, the chinkara have disappeared. They are often restless at this hour, before the increasing heat has induced sleepiness or suggested the shade of a bush or steep bank in which to chew the cud. From the shape of the ground it seems unlikely that they can be anywhere in the small hollow close in front, likelier that they have crossed the opposite ridge ; but, still cautiously, we raise ourselves higher to get a better view, when, with a sudden "*Tsish ! Tissh . . . oo !*" there comes the sound of light, bouncing hoof-strokes on the hard ground.

Two doe gazelles bound off like rubber balls from a hidden ravine at our feet, and their slim yellow shapes dart up and over the next little ridge.

Down go we in the sitting position, slip forearm through sling, glance at that sky-line, snick up the 200-yard leaf, set rifle to shoulder, and wait. Aha ! As we thought. Last to go, first to halt ; gallant little chap !—or is it the lazier, less quicksilvery way of the mere male ? Anyway, the buck now follows his clever little wives . . . and . . . oh, lucky Jim ! . . . it is the big chink of many a fruitless stalk. He, too, bounces smartly up the slope, but at the top slows down, doesn't quite know what is the matter, turns off, trots a few steps along the crest, then, wheeling, halts ; tense-limbed, twiddle-tailed.

This might easily be one of those occasions when the fierce little "*Biff . . ff . . . ff . . . ff*" of the miniature H.V. rips emptily over the echoing champaign, and a tantalising, flicker-

ing, vanishing speck mocks at our hours of careful manœuvring, our patient, perspiring pains. But the cleverest of gazelles is sometimes caught napping, and to-day comes a tardy reward —the requital of "*Biff . . . ff . . . putt.*"

Racing across and up . . . up, we gaze eagerly over the ridge, rifle held ready. But there is no need. A few yards down the reverse slope he lies, the long, slender hindlegs outstretched, forelegs crossed, proud little head bent gracefully back and displaying the beautiful ringed horns. Not a blemish on his pure white and brown—save just by the shoulder, where a drop of blood and a few disarranged hairs show where the tiny missile has struck so mercifully true.

And that bonny little life of his; to take which there has been such expenditure of human thought and endeavour down the ages—to end in this. The labour that wrested the material from earth. The mathematics, dynamics, optics, geometry, chemistry, metallurgy, and what-not that evolved and created this horrid little engine for projecting solids. What right have we to use such devil's tools?

But this is begging the question. Unless man rules out the taking of animal life *altogether*, the scientific way is the least reprehensible; the "humane killer" preferable to the abattoir; the bullet, *especially* the *un*expected bullet (which is the rule) a very different thing from the squeal-producing knife that gives us all our breakfast bacon. Come, my "humanitarian," even my strict vegetarian, you are entitled to your views, as I to mine—but first put off your leathern shoon, your woollens, and your wife her furs and feathers, make absolutely sure of your own "blood-innocence."

As for the "easiness" of modern sporting weapons—animals soon adjust themselves to changed conditions. A general reversion to the bow and arrow (by no means an inefficient weapon) would find the buck that now runs at 300 yards tolerant of man down to 50 or 60.

I have already referred, in this volume and elsewhere, to the *chital*, or spotted deer, and the large herds of these beautiful

animals that I met with from time to time when making more distant expeditions. In the journal of the Bombay Natural History Society, and the 1922 edition of Rowland Ward's Records, I see that actually the longest head, 39½ inches, comes from the United Provinces, but the great majority of large ones, 39 inches and under, from the C.P. and Berar ; as did my own better heads, ranging between 36 and 37½ inches. My best, 38 inches, was shot close to the great falls of the Indravati, in Bastar, the locality being very appropriately known as Chítrakót—abode of the spotted deer.

Curiously enough, as occurred in the case of my best sambar, a gentleman of the country with the *flair* of his race for incomprehensible situations, materialised from nowhere, and suddenly appeared in that remote and trackless jungle, clad in a wedding garment ! I had already sighted what was going to be my record chital, but luckily was not yet fully committed to the stalk ; so was able to do a little materialising myself and give the unfortunate intruder the worst fright of his life.

An instance of these little practical jokes of fate is amusingly described in, I think, *Flashlight and Rifle*, when there are suddenly, fortuitously, and closely brought together, in a night wilderness of riverain bush, a scandalised hippo, two mysterious white men, a big explosion of photographic flash-powder, and two awe-stricken, wandering natives !

Some of the most beautiful jungle scenes in India are to be found in the small forest blocks of Berar that lie towards the Pén Ganga. Those little *bandi* literally teemed with chital, and, as they were also well-favoured of tigers, leopards, and other game, and are typical of the drier, less hilly Central Indian jungle, I have chosen a colour-drawing of such woodland, with a little group of spotted deer at water, as the frontispiece to this volume ; and hope that, such as it is, it may serve to stir memories of similar delightful surroundings.

Such jungles are at their best, I think, about January-February—when, unfortunately, soldiers can seldom get to them—at which season most of the longer grass and other

tangle born of the previous rains has collapsed. One can then obtain a fairly long view at ground-level, while there is still sufficient leafage generally—before the too twiggy bareness of the hot-weather sets in—to maintain the full beauty of the autumnally tinted woods.

At this time of year there may come a day or two of light rain, and after one of those welcome precipitations the chital woods seem more than usually attractive. Dawn comes differently—cool and grey instead of in colourful brilliance; a layer of thin mist lies along the country; the rain has darkened the soil—more restful to the eye; the tyrant sun is veiled; and a soft breeze wafts unexpectedly delicate scents from the soaked earth and wet swathes of fallen grass and leaves.

Great is this magic of moisture in a normally parched and sun-stricken environment, contrast rendering it doubly desirable, that refreshing humidity that is our birthright, revile it though we may in our own islands—the climate that is part of our very flesh and blood. No need to-day to hurry over our chota hazri, to race the precious minutes of a normal Indian dawn, for this cloud will persist awhile; perhaps the rain itself is not yet at an end.

And as we silently prowl the cool forest—silently because of its now sodden carpeting—another advantage is evident . . . all tracks are fresh tracks! Last night we fell asleep to a delightful pattering on the tautening canvas of our moving gipsy home, and it is reported (Indians are very early risers) that the rain did not cease until four of this morning. To-day of all days, therefore, is our opportunity for gaining reliable evidence of the presence and doings of the more important denizens of this bandi, for the feline race, disliking the dripping undergrowth, will have kept to nullahs, game paths, and forest tracks. So, unless that legendary 42-incher should cross our path—more desirable even than a tiger—the chital are safe; moreover, most of them are now in velvet.

On our hot-weather prowlings in those jungles it was frequently noticed that wherever a great, solitary, grey-chapped

boar was found resting under some evergreen bush (for this locality is a natural sanctuary for astonishing numbers of such), there also, within a few feet of the reposing swine, would be a peacock, a single, glorious, full-tailed bird! What curious reason may there be for this strange companionship? Moreover, such peacocks seemed unusually tolerant of man's intrusion; they behaved more like those of northerly, orthodoxly Hindu India, where this bird is religiously protected, and semi-tame. The boars, too, were most casual in demeanour. Rising slowly—if they rose at all—they might trot a few steps after the demurely retiring peacock, then stand, with a slight cant of the head, in attitude of "touch not a cat but a glaive," as we passed by.

Under the circumstances, our intentions were of course pacific, our minds conveyed no message of hostile intent (see page 92). Yet this unusual confidence of both pig and peacock also testified to a pleasing absence of native guns in the neighbouring country.

It was in those jungles that my Waler (Australian) mare, absolutely staunch, and never known to shy, surprised me one evening, walking campward in the gloaming, by coming to a gradual halt and gazing fixedly at the broken trunk of a dead tree by the track-side a short way ahead. I must say that it was a very fair representation of a seated panther, and the mottled bark provided the necessary spots.

It was some time before I could induce her to proceed; but after telling her that she ought to be ashamed of herself, stopping for a wretched leopard, she moved on without wasting another look at the thing.

When I told Abbas Khan about this he at once offered a characteristically solemn, head-wagging explanation:

"Barra Chíní must have been perverting her, trying to frighten her!" he said.

I had two Deccani ponies with me, real *badmáshes*, ruffians; the more depraved of which bore a pinky-white nose and the above native name, which may be translated as "Big Sugar";

and I was tickled to find that from that time forward the two low country-breds were always tethered at a discreet distance from the mare.

The above is interesting to consider side by side with Selous's expressed opinion that domestic animals have no instinctive fear of the felidæ.

To me the chital always was, and is, the most beautiful of all hoofed animals. No other deer can touch this little stag (his bodily size is very slightly greater than that of the fallow deer) for looks. In shape, colouring, proportionate length of horns, gait and deportment, he is supreme among cervidæ. The only other ungulate that I thought might challenge him is the impála antelope of Africa, which is practically identical in size.

By great good fortune, I once found a fine specimen of each of these animals in contiguous paddocks at the Pretoria Zoological Gardens. I have never seen such splendid specimens in any other Zoo; and to the man who was moved to put those two together I doff my hat. I spent at least half an hour in watching and comparing the lovely creatures, and had the greatest difficulty in deciding which I considered the lovelier. Finally, after having seen many hundreds of both animals in their natural habitat, I award the palm to the chital.

The impala, with his gloriously shining coat of deep red-gold and contrasting white of underparts, throat, eye-spaces, and inner ears, his intense, quivering alertness, and his elastically ever-springy limbs, is the incarnation of elegance and activity.

The chital's perfect lines, his richly harmonious colouring, his large soft eye and delicate moist muzzle, the noble sweep of his long antlers, and the dignified grace of his regal pacings proclaim him the doyen of the aristocrats.

One of the most interesting long expeditions we made from Ellichpur was to the native State of Bastar, a very remote jungly country situated between the C.P. and the Eastern Ghats.

My father was the first British official to assume political charge of that country in 1860—which only one white man had previously visited—and his diaries of that time fired me with a longing to go there. It is interesting to note that human sacrifice had been forbidden not long before his time, but still lingered awhile, underground. Failing their immemorial methods of obtaining the necessary victims, the now secret emissaries of the priesthood would surprise and capture some wretched field-watcher occupying a lonely machan at night. One can imagine the horror of the trembling wretch, who, nodding atop his little platform amid the tall grain, suddenly heard the ominous rustling of the millet-stalks, and found himself hemmed in by the remorseless temple retainers. To him it would be no consolation at all that his gore, libated over the goddess in the same fashion as is now done with the blood of cocks and goats, would ensure a plentiful monsoon, bounteous crops, and many sons to the great ones of the land.

The Indravati Valley attracted us the most; and my companion was a brother-officer, a very keen shikari, dead shot, and clever fisherman.

Having expected rather too much of Bastar, we were discussing our "disappointment" one day just before leaving the country; and well I remember his prophetic remark, that in spite of that we would often look back on the trip as a wonderful experience.

We covered in our wanderings nearly five hundred miles, mostly through little-known and magnificent jungle in "Márdián," the country of the Máriahs—and Múriahs—aboriginal tribes of a very wild and interesting nature, still bow-and-arrow people. The beautiful, clear Indravati, a mountain river throughout our peregrinations, was a delightful feature of that expedition.

In this and the southern parts of India the máhsír-fishing season is the hot-weather, and we had any amount of good sport with the rod, although unsuccessful with the bigger fish that undoubtedly inhabit the larger pools.

This fine river would richly repay careful and knowledgeable angling research, at the proper time of year.

For a virgin stream the máhsír were by no means unsophisticated, and we had also come equipped rather simply, with little but spoon-baits of various kinds. Moreover, we fished only on " off " days. Finally, we were left tackleless. Everything we had—supplemented by tea- and dessert-spoon baits —was, within three weeks or so, sacrificed to the spirit of this rocky, cavernous stream and its powerful fish—each of which seemed to have its sub-aqueous " dug-out," for which, if you let it rip, it made one mad mahsir rush and broke you—or hung up your trace so that you had to break it yourself.

Our visit to Bastar was really in the nature of a reconnaissance. We had been unable to obtain detailed information about the then most favoured habitat of its game, or to send ahead any of our regimental shikar gang to spy out the land ; so, until we ourselves reached our ground, all we had to go on were the diaries of forty years before.

A cross-country journey of 140 miles from railhead, latterly very rough and difficult, brought us to our first camp on the river.

Here the Indravati splits up into a number of rocky channels, through which its clear waters go rushing and gurgling with a sound that can be heard far into the surrounding forests. The little islets between these channels are covered with the densest low vegetation ; great ferns droop their fronds over the surface of the rapid stream, and the banks hide moist patches of maidenhair. Altogether a pleasing and astonishing sight in this part of India.

Of course the imagination immediately peopled these impenetrable islands with buffaloes galore, and many tigers. With elephants it was just possible that such coverts could be worked ; but even then the difficulties would be great, as deep, fern-fringed channels cut up the whole of this strange river-bed, and there were hidden dangers in holes and boulders. Immediately opposite our little camp there was a broad pool, which looked quite free from " muggers "—man-eating crocs

—being nowhere very deep, with sandy shore and bottom. I rode a short way down-stream to have a look round, and crossed the river with some difficulty at some shallows. Coming back opposite camp the mare and I had a little swim to the camp shore. K. then joined me, and we had a pleasant bathe, troubled only by our topis—abominable necessities in the tropics.

Endeavouring to obtain information, we found the local people very scarce and shy. Buffalo were said to visit some islands downstream. So, that afternoon, we obtained four dug-outs from a riverain " village " and had them tied together, two and two. With a little arrangement one thus obtains a stable craft that will carry four or five people, with rods, guns, rifles, food, and drink. We started off downstream, putting up our rods and tackle as we went. I affixed a 3-inch hog-backed spoon to my trace. Paddling over the calms of the camp pool, we shot through a rapid and entered island channels. Tall reeds hung over the dongas as we brushed past. Pea-fowl thrashed up their heavy flight and sailed overhead to other coverts. As we entered a deeper, swift run, the spoon was swung out under the ferny bank, and almost at once came a heavy blow—and I was fast in a nice little mahsir. A few furious rushes and the 13-foot trout-rod drew a four-pounder alongside. We now heard the roar of large rapids and were soon borne at a great pace into them, a little anxious on account of our very small amount of free-board. But the boats were well managed. Swooping round a jungly island and another fast bit of water, we emerged in a " salmon-pool " where there was again a blow at my spoon and the greenheart was bowing to another and better mahsir.

The boatmen had been scanning the banks on our way down, but no tracks could be seen. About three miles downstream we landed, and, taking our rifles, separated and walked back to camp up the left bank. I ascended a rocky hill and got a capital view. Distance was lost in a haze of smoke from several forest fires, and all around was a sea of thick brown-purplish jungle. Larger green trees bordered the nullahs.

Below lay the broad emerald line of the Indravati's bed, the roar of its swift waters rising into the still evening air.

Next day, hearing of a man Amir Ali of Kútrú, we sent for him, and ourselves set off on an all-day reconnaissance far down-stream to a large island reported to hold buffs. In this extremely broken country our quickest way down-stream was by river, so we dropped down in our lashed dongas, landing at all likely-looking spots and examining the banks for traces of game. By midday we had arrived at the big island, where we fed and rested, afterwards searching it thoroughly, but finding only old tracks.

The return voyage of four hours was latterly a troublesome and damp one, for, although an early start was made, we were belated, and night fell before we surmounted the last of the rapids. To get up those the dongas had to be unlashed and passed up one by one by the yelling boatmen. Everything got wet, and in the starlight, with the dugout gunnels only a few inches clear of water level, and precious rifles at stake, the rushing foam looked most uninviting; so we got out and helped. The little Mariahs worked like men for three miles of this sort of thing. Finally, chilled, tired, and soaked to the waist, we at last emerged on the bosom of the home pool and paddled for the lights of camp.

On the morrow, at the advice of Amir Ali, we moved to his village. We had left some good game country behind us, and to a flank, he said; but there was better ahead, and he would get local shikaris who knew it thoroughly.

On reaching our new camp we found a small half-dry tank hard by, on which several bunches of duck and teal could be seen paddling and diving among the lotus plants. After breakfast, therefore, there followed a pleasant little shoot, the result being thirty-eight head, also four belated snipe! This day K. shot a very fine kind of greenpigeon, the "imperial" I believe, half again as big as a blue rock, French-grey all over except the wing-coverts, which were a fine deep, lustrous blue-green. This bird seems to go in small parties of six or so.

We then moved some few miles and camped in a lovely

spot on the bank of the Indravati, where we began to get on terms with the fauna of Bastar. A very fine bull buff, with a massive pair of horns 112½ inches from tip to tip across the forehead, was followed by a 9 feet 5 inch tiger—which delivered itself into our hands by killing and lying up in a nice, easily beaten piece of cover. Both those prizes fell to my friend, after which I could overhear Abbas Khan's melancholy dissertations on *tagdir*, *kazza*, and *kismat*, and knew that he was notching up one more proof of the legend of my brain-seams. However, my turn was to come sooner than expected.

There was one particularly fine pool close to that camp. By half-closing the eyes to the vegetation and the weirdly shaped hills, it might have been a pool on any typical Highland river. The angler will understand. A glorious stream entered the pool, swirling back in deep eddies round great grey granite rocks. Resolving into oily dimples at its deepest, it tailed off over shingly shallows.

My first cast with a fly-spoon, the neck of the run was dashed at instantly, and the reel sang on a high note, as the fish, evidently a good one—yet it is so difficult to judge of the size of a mahsir by his first rush—tore across the pool. But next moment back trailed the line; the hook broken off, such is the compressive power of the mahsir's leathery jaws. I had scarcely mended matters when I heard a shout, and on the far side K. came floundering over the rocks, his 17-feet Irish rod bowing to a nice fish that was running down-stream. Just as it entered my pool there was a sharp crack! a distant "damn" came over the roar of the waters, and the pride of Carrick-on-Shannon had yielded to an Indian fish—aided by the desiccating Indian climate. K. now gave him the butt hard and proper—it was all he had to give—and the mahsir, played like a tarpon, soon had a little Mariah's thumbs in his gills; 18 pounds.

A bigger fish than usual then rushed out sixty yards of my line at one swoop, and went off with my gimp collar and steel wire trace.

I forget how often that long afternoon the infernally knowing

mahsir of the river fixed me up in holes, or how often my excellent little Mariah—special *bucksheesh* for you, my little man—released the fishless tackle. Once too often, however, for a little chap of 5 lbs. fixed himself up too and got drowned ; the Mariah diver rescuing fish and tackle in the pluckiest fashion from a hole in the dark swirling depths of a most dangerous looking " mill-race." I fished on determinedly, and, as the setting sun shot forth his latest shafts under a heavy bank of clouds, I got hold of a ten-pounder, gave him the whole strength of my greenheart, and drew him to a shelving sandbank in less than five minutes. After this the same peaceful paddle to camp, down that fascinating river, seeing a couple of the big black-and-red Malabar squirrels playing in some tall trees.

Rain fell that night, and so, under perfect tracking conditions, " my " morning dawned. By the merest chance a villager, passing by, happened to mention to one of our people that the fresh tracks of a big *barré* had crossed his footpath a couple of miles away, and we, who were on the point of starting in the opposite direction in search of tracks, got away on a breast-high scent at once.

With me was a local shikari, a Gond named Juggoo—a tiny fellow whose head I could have tucked under my armpit. Except for a length of very old string and an older piece of cloth smaller than a postcard he was naked. On his head was a tightly fitting skin cap with little flaps—a " cloche " in fact—of which he seemed very proud.

Close to our tiger beat of the previous day we hit off the traces of *two* buffalo, and judged that they denoted a big bull accompanied, as is often the case, by a smaller one dancing attendance. They had evidently crossed the river from Mardian proper and were on their way south.

The buffaloes of those parts travel great distances in moving from one favourite resort to another. I was assured that forty miles in a night was often covered by these animals, especially by the bulls ! Herds ordinarily stick to one locality, at least for definite seasons, and travel slowly.

Owing to the slight rain overnight, the tracking was comparatively easy. It led us for about six miles steadily through thin, dry sapling jungle, across little clearings, old, deserted, and dried-up rice land, and into the jungle again. Four hours had passed; the sun beat down fiercely through a rain-cleared atmosphere. We cautiously explored many bits of thickish jungle, where under the shade of larger trees some green growth retained its leaves—a typical lying-up place indeed, but the buffaloes had not tarried. It seemed as though they must be on one of those forty-mile jaunts.

Emerging on another apparently interminable piece of dry grass land covered with clumps of leafless jungle, I turned to ask some question of Juggoo, when we all suddenly sank down and remained motionless.

A huge pair of sweeping horns and a shadowy mass under some small trees, two hundred yards off, had caught our eyes simultaneously. Their owner was directly facing us.

I crept forward and cautiously raised my uncovered head behind a little tree. It was difficult to believe that he had not seen us; but it was so. His companion lay close to him, turned away, and slowly moved a smaller pair of horns to and fro as the flies settled on his blue-grey hide.

All was well; for the big bull's ears were steadily flip-flapping. He was unconscious of our presence; the midday zephyrs blew from him to us.

Had I but known it, my best plan was undoubtedly to crawl straight at the buffaloes. There was just enough cover. But fate ordained otherwise. It was arranged that I and Juggoo should creep back, and, taking advantage of the ground, work in on the buffs across the wind. So we crawled away, and started our detour.

I had fixed in my mind the appearance of the tree which the buffaloes had chosen, and about half an hour later I lay about three hundred yards to its flank. Hence, the stalking was very precarious work, for there was hardly any cover. Another ten minutes passed, Juggoo remained behind, and I lay behind a tree 150 yards nearer. Both buffaloes had now

risen to their feet and were standing motionless, save for a flick of a tail or ear, under their tree. I squirmed a foot or two sideways and crawled quickly over the burning ground to my last bit of cover, a dilapidated ant-heap. As I reached its shelter, the smaller bull turned sharply in my direction, and stood as if carved out of ebony. They were only about a hundred and twenty paces off now, but completely guarded by a tangle of twigs and thin branches. The smaller buff was extremely suspicious, and to add to my disquietude the breeze kept changing, and one or two small dust-swirls went gyrating over the ground. I was liable to exposure at any instant.

The watchful buff now commenced to give vent to sharp snorts, at the first of which the big one wheeled round. Then they suddenly wheeled in another direction. Then the smaller again turned and gazed in my direction, standing motionless. The bigger, after this, calmed down and after many long minutes his companion followed suit. Having heard terrible tales of the ferocity of *Bos bubalus*, I scarcely thought it worth while, on this my first encounter with him, to make a sudden bolt in their direction, clear the obstructing twigs, and fire; so there was nothing for it but to lie "doggo."

At last, as I slowly roasted there on the hard red soil, a small hot puff of air came along and passed over me towards those large grey bodies—and on that they both ran out from their little trees—halted, noses up and out—and almost at once broke into a lumbering canter.

Leaping to my feet, my rifle was at my shoulder, the sight on the big fellow's ponderous frame—when the smaller of the pair got bang in front of him. Darting aside to clear this obstruction, they were nearly a couple of hundred yards off, and then I got but a quartering view of my quarry; but with faith in the great power of my ·400 cordite let go a steady shot—and "felt" it go home. He swung right across his companion, and was again occulted. By this time I was running at top speed after the buffs, which were going round in a curve for a belt of thick forest. Again the big 'un ran clear. Pulling up, I raised the ·400, but, misled by his great

size, the shot went low, and next moment, with a huge plunge he was into cover. . . .

It was blazing hot. There was no blood on the track. And another six miles of slow tramping, slow tracking, with many a fault, many a weary casting back, was no treat. Six miles! It is easy to say, to write that. Doing it was quite another matter. Obligation in any case, that grand pair of horns, too, spurs us on. Now the sun is setting. Again we are at fault. Ah! he has turned back on his track! Is it the danger signal? Or merely preparatory to lying up? That last deep nullah must have tried his strength!

Juggoo is certain he is lying under that tree to our right. I put up my binoculars to look. A yell and a crash to my left, five paces away. I drop the glasses to my chest and let fly into a huge black mass that rushes through the jungle. It appears all at once to gallop "flatter." I rush out to the right. There he goes across an open bit, faster than anything I could have imagined of such size. Steady now. . . . Bang! . . . a cloud of dust and the long, yellow-white grass closes over him.

Twelve miles from camp. Sun gone down. Rather a hazy notion of our whereabouts. A puddle gives the men a drink; and I drain the last few tepid drops of my water-bottle.

We find a path. Interminable jungle; horribly tiring going; here and there soft, sandy nullahs; then a few Mariah huts, with a sickening smell of fermenting mhowa flowers. Boots very troublesome. Blisters.

More and more jungle, more nullahs, then, at last, some dried rice-fields, and the hamlet of Jégur. Here my mare; and five miles to camp behind relays of frayed-bamboo torches.

A whisky and sparklet. A gloriously hot tub. A good dinner which K. had sportingly awaited. A large cheroot. Then bed, tired but happy, with the soft rushing of the Indravati in our ears, and the stars above.

As we worked our way eastward we passed the northern

end of an extraordinary range of hills called Baila-Déla, or Bullock's Hump, from the shape of part of its crest. This detached, narrow range, to begin with, runs due north and south—which is uncommon in peninsular India. Further, it is just a great wall, over 4,000 feet in height, thirty miles long and one wide, grooved on top into divergent valley systems in which run considerable streams, one flowing south, and the other north for eight miles, after which it drops off the sheer wall to the plain below. The Baila-Dela used to hold very fine bison and in every way was the kind of place to attract me greatly ; but we had to pass it by, for our sixty days' leave was barely sufficient for the itinerary we had undertaken.

Soon after this, between long. 80 and 81, we came to the western limit of the great *sál* forests that cover the country for hundreds of miles eastward. We had never seen the sal before and were greatly taken with its appearance. Its beauty, however, did not compensate for the general lack of game in its forests, or for its unhealthiness, which is due to the exceedingly heavy dews that it attracts, with a treacherously sudden fall of temperature at sunset.

The sal is a magnificent tree, tall, plumb-straight, branchless until the head is reached, where it spreads out into a fine shock of most refreshingly green leaves resembling those of the Spanish chestnut. Thickets of its saplings grow exceedingly close, resembling the masts of fishing boats in a crowded harbour. The shade of these forests is practically continuous. White ants (termites) are very partial to the bark of the sal, and as the soil is mostly red their earthwork gives the trunks a picturesque appearance, contrasting strongly with the leafy canopy.

Fording the river from densely jungled island to island, we camped near some splendid runs and pools pent in by huge black rocks ; where life with mahsir, buffs, and bison was very pleasant, but where we could not bring ourselves to linger, as the nights were tortured by mosquitoes of a peculiarly voracious kind, and we had no nets for our wretched retainers.

At this place we obtained two local shikaris who were about the best I have met anywhere. The inhabitants of Márdian are born hunters, there is no doubt of that. In their purely bow-and-arrow days they about balanced with the game, but since gas-pipe guns have reached them through the agency of the horn and skin trading devils from the Hyderabad country the big game has sadly suffered—which we could easily see by comparing the conditions of our time with my father's detailed diaries.

These two men were brothers, of the Halaba caste, and superior fellows, Ghamandi and Phágu.

Ghamandi accompanied me. He was a very striking old fellow, tall, fair, and well built, with a curious but by no means unpleasing cast of countenance caused by his very strangely shaped lips. A little mat of the cleanest and neatest grey hair cropped rather short. Ghamandi's hair was wonderful, scrupulously clean, and quite innocent of any of the villainous oils and essences in which most natives rejoice. Ghamandi in the jungles was a marvel. He was not a man. He was a phantom, a tree trunk, an intangible shadow. With his hands crossed on his breast, and noiseless tread, his sharp eye at one and the same moment on the ground, to his flanks, and ahead, he glided on in front of me.

A little axe was hitched on his shoulder. I was feeling very limp and seedy this morning, and 11½ pounds of rifle —I hate handing over my rifle to be carried for me—was adding to my frailness. We traversed about three miles of very likely looking jungle in a semicircle and had touched the base of the hills. Toiling up a little rising ground, I thought I heard a strange kind of soft, grunting squeal. I whispered the fact to Ghamandi, but he shook his head, and so, trusting in the superior acuteness of the wild man's senses, I blundered up over the rise. As I did so, off bolted a herd of bison. They ran down into and crossed a nullah full of thin, dry, bamboo jungle, and ascended its farther bank in a body. Behind them suddenly appeared the towering form of a bull, but oh! such a thin one! His appearance would

have been grotesque but for the pathos of it. He was evidently very sick.

He had a goodish head, however, and that is the consideration with wild big game, where "larder" requirements do not count.

The shot was a difficult one, but I thought it had been successful as the bull lumbered away in the wake of the herd, so I sped another shot at him through a little open space in the bamboo stems.

Running up on the tracks, we found a good deal of blood, and without difficulty ran it along for about half a mile at a good pace; then the bleeding ceased, and tracking became very slow and difficult. Fever-shivers chattered my teeth, and I had to leave the "pugging" entirely to Ghamandi, and follow him, feeling good for nothing. To cut matters short, we kept on the bison's tracks for about two hours, and at last gave it up. I sat down on a tree trunk and nursed my aching head.

After casting round several times, Ghamandi returned and said the only chance was to do a bit of a round in some green sal jungle half a mile farther on, on the chance of the wounded bull being there; so I rose, and dragged my fever-stricken carcase after him.

The bison *was* exactly where Ghamandi took me, and when the old man stopped, became a tree, and slowly raised an expressive finger, I stole to the front. There lay a huge black bulk not sixty yards off in the shadow of a giant sal tree. I crawled nearer, raised the ·400, and that *pérma* slept with his fathers.

A most foul and offensive odour rose from the newly slain bison. What could it be? With difficulty we levered the carcase over, and the cause of the mischief was apparent. There was a wound on his side the size of a saucer, simply crawling with maggots, and dripping with noisome exudation. Faugh! With a stick I probed the wound. An arrow-haft! The shikar knife completed the unravelling of the mystery, and at last out came the broken-off head of one of the vicious-looking Muriah arrows!

It was surprising that the herd had tolerated the presence of the wounded bull.

Poor old fellow! He had no doubt been wending his way, in the small hours of morning, back to the hills from the river, when there twanged the bamboo-strip string of the Muriah bow and with a snort of pain he rushed blindly away.

How many miserable days had that shaft rankled in his side? How much blood had he not lost by the razor edge of the cunningly barbed iron? How lucky the fate that to-day brought him before a more merciful weapon! I have that abominable arrowhead now.

One afternoon those artists in shikar, the Halaba brothers, bringing only two or three friends with them, beat for us some good-looking covers extending along the river bank and connecting with the densely-bushed islands at this place. This beating was by a long way the best that I have ever seen done in any country—perfection of design in edging game quietly along to within close arrow-range. The wind was carefully studied (moist and damp here), and although a clean sweep was made of every living creature in the covert, not a sound was to be heard but an occasional slight tap or crack of twig. Once only had I met with something of the kind . . . in the Mága Valley, ten miles north-east of Ellichpur—and there, too, two brothers were responsible for the artistry.

As a matter of fact the Muriah arrow—and practically all arrows made by wild men are remarkably alike—is very efficient. It is the wild man's bow that is nearly always so poor, so lacking in power. This bow-and-arrow subject, long years after my Bastar and other jungle days, has recently become exceedingly interesting. I shall bring it up later on. Besides their well-designed broad-headed arrows these jungle people also use the blunt-head, the arrow fitted with a fid of wood for shooting small things—squirrels, peafowl, etc.

Making our way up the Indravati Valley, here contracting to the foot of the great falls, we were being helped along by

some " archers," and at a halt I was examining their weapons, including a blunt-head.

Drawing the bow at a venture, and withal gently, I succeeded in hitting, with this projectile, an old gentleman who was bending down away from me—hitting him rather " far back." This little piece of horse-play was immensely relished by the company at large, and I perceived that our popularity was assured.

One of our wayside camps was at the edge of the river again. After dinner I threw away the butt end of my cheroot and it was at once taken by a good fish ! Out came K.'s little rod, of course, at once ; but the first cast resulted in a bad " hang-up " and plentiful language in the moonlight.

Chítrakót, to which I alluded in my remarks on spotted deer, was our most easterly point. After that we turned northward, then westward towards our railhead at Waróra. At Chitrakot the Indravati is barred across by an intrusion of columnar basalt, and its placid upper waters glide into two rocky channels, to fall sheer over an overhanging precipice of ninety feet into a magnificent pool. This pool is about two hundred yards wide and one hundred long, and of great depth. Even at this dry season, and in a year of drought, the thunder of the falls can be heard long before one reaches the vicinity of the river. The precipice extends right across the river, which, in the rainy season, must be a magnificent sight. Our camp lay about half a mile upstream, and the two eighty-pound tents were snugly ensconced beneath a bower of small green-leaved trees, in a most picturesque spot—and a healthy one, free of mosquitoes. At our very doors stretched a long deep reach, with the eye-knobs of a crocodile or two showing above its calm surface.

There were some good runs below the big pool at the falls and K. got a 13-pound mahsir there, while I as usual picked up a few small ones. One evening I had a curious adventure with a fine fish, that must have damaged the bladder that serves to keep fish upright in their element. Possibly he had come over the falls. We were paddling shorewards in the

donga when I sighted something white and glistening lying on the surface, and altered course. It was a fine mahsir of at least 20 lbs. weight, floating belly uppermost. One of the donga-men stooped over and lifted it in his arms; but with a gasp and a plunge the fish slipped from his grasp, and with a few feeble strokes of his tail descended to the depths. About five minutes later the fish reappeared, a few yards on, floating once more on his back. This time we paddled gently up, and my idea was to strike the triangle of my spoon-bait into his jaws. However, the boatman was not quick enough; he hitched the hooks to the angle of the mahsir's mouth certainly and "whirr" went the reel as this queerly-hooked fish bored down again to the bottom of the deep pool; but after playing him for a short while, back came a slack line.

A third time the fish floated up. This time I'd take him myself! We paddle up, steadily! My thumbs approach the mahsir's gills, and next instant he is mine, when—splash! and for the last time down he goes.

Our next halting-place was Madhóta, which, in the diaries of only thirty-five years before, was noted for "surprising numbers" of swamp deer (*Rucervus duvaucelli*). As we rested under great trees, awaiting arrival of our transport, news of buffaloes came in. My heavy cordite rifle had been placed leaning against a tree for about half an hour, and on opening it and glancing through the barrels before starting off I noticed that one of them was completely closed by some foreign substance. By whittling down a strip of bamboo I pushed the obstruction out and found it to have been the mud cell built by one of the ever-busy yellow "mason" hornets. This rammed well home the value of what some people dub a "crochety fussiness" over one's weapons. Had the rifle been fired with that solid cell-work in the barrel there would have been an obituary notice which I for one would not have bothered to read, and possibly a passing reference or scientific dissertation in the sporting press

or the gunmaker's world on another mysterious gun accident.

It is interesting to note that the acid (formic, I suppose) contained in the hornet's "puddle" had, in that short time eaten into the steel and visibly marked the bore with a faint ring.

Next day we devoted all our energies to a thorough search for swamp deer, for, although the natives of the locality assured us that none were now to be seen in that part of the country, we were unable to believe that the vast numbers described in the diaries could have entirely disappeared. Alas, however, it was a fact. The habits of swamp deer—the least nocturnal of Indian deer—must have laid them particularly open to the Muriahs as soon as the horn-merchants began to exploit that country and give them guns; so, in our Bastar wanderings, we failed even to hear of a single one of this beautiful species.

On that search I had left camp in a grove of great mangoes and taken a south-easterly course, finally circling northward and returning from the east. This locality is elevated some hundreds of feet above and only two or three miles from the edge of the Indravati basin to the south, and is situated on a plateau that shelves down northward or away from that basin, resembling in fact a maritime upland that slopes down landward, away from the higher cliff-edge, and which is, obviously, no place for a large stream flowing *away* from the sea!

Judge therefore of our perplexity, with camp in full view half a mile away westward, to encounter a very considerable swift stream flowing north and barring our progress. Nor had we crossed any water on our outward way!

Here was sheer madness! We could not possibly have circled round above its source, and so, unknowingly, got round eastward of it, because, from its volume, its source must obviously be at least a dozen miles away, whereas at a sixth of that distance occurred the steep fall southward to the Indravati!

Such a situation is, of course, the greater puzzle to people who have almost too knobbly a bump of locality, who, for instance, if transported on a pitch-dark night to some totally unfamiliar place are acutely ill at ease until they have re-orientated themselves. It is an outrage on their place-sense.

Thus I stood, dumbfounded, gazing now at camp in the mango grove, now at the beautiful—and unusually clear—stream at my feet. Presently, looking farther afield, I could clearly see the ground I had crossed when starting out on my tramp, and as the eye followed it, confirming memory, I suddenly remembered that I had passed a peculiar narrow belt of unusually verdant tree and bush that had ended abruptly in a queer little round clump. It was by that same little belt that I was now standing; and there, a few hundred yards to my left, was the clump!

Forthwith, feeling somewhat relieved but considerably nettled, I walked up-stream and found what I now knew I must find. Pushing through the close-set greenery of that clump I gazed down at a wonderful sight—a deep circular pool some eighteen feet in diameter, of the most crystalline clarity I have ever set eyes on, and in its centre, clearly visible, a dark rock-aperture, a subaqueous crater like a great throat, from which with powerful eddyings issued a tremendous spring.

Thus the famous *kúnd* of Madhota—famous only in this little-known jungle princedom—the Raja's pool, in which, with no little religious ceremony, the ruling chief bathes once a year.

Among the many interests of that remote land was the big maroon squirrel. We called it the Malabar squirrel, but it is really a close variety, the so-called "Central Indian red squirrel" (*Sciurus maximus*) a most beautiful creature, its head and body about twenty inches long, tail another twenty inches, and of a bright maroon-chestnut hue with dark maroon tail (pale yellow tip) and black or very dark underparts. These handsome fellows, very numerous in the heavy forests of this

part of India, are most active and vociferous, with their loud "*Chúk . . . chúk . . . chúrk*," in the cool of morning and evening.

Some years later (in Bison Land) I obtained a young tame specimen of this species, about three-quarters grown, in a jungle village. It made a most intelligent and engaging pet. I was informed that its wonderful tameness and other good qualities were due to its having been suckled by a young woman who had lost her infant.

Linga—for so it had been named after some semi-divine *devata*, or Hindu religious hero, that I have now forgotten—(the word itself denoting the phallic emblem)—would perch sedately on my shoulder as I sat at a meal, gently nibbling at my ear or accepting various titbits with a delicate discrimination and the most perfect manners. Next moment he would leap from me, I would hear the strong scratching of his claws on bark, and with a chatter of delight he would be out of sight up some huge tree. Presently, taking no notice, I would see him ground-hopping towards me from quite another direction.

Poor Linga! I did not succeed in keeping him long. After leaving his jungles he was travelling with my servants in a bullock-cart, when his little collar and watch-chain that now had to be used became entangled, and brought his attractive little life to an untimely and much-mourned end.

Here, in the haunts of the wild buffalo, largest but one of all Indian game, is also found the smallest—the mouse deer. Of very ancient zoological lineage, Science calls it *Memimna indica*, now grouped as *tragulina*, all of which means that it is a chevrotain, a tiny deer less than one foot high and two feet long, high-rumped, of a curious greenish-grey colour, striped with whitish dotted "harness" markings, and weighing about six pounds. Its upper jaw is armed with tiny but exceedingly sharp tusks—enlarged "canines."

I knocked over one of these with a charge of small shot.

The mouse-deer walks on the very tips of its hooves, in a

ridiculously stilted way ; and natives say that it cannot bend its knees and therefore has to sleep leaning against something.

A powerful odour clung to the specimen I shot ; but my companion assured me that the cooked meat would be free from this disconcerting scent and very good indeed. One of the advantages of native cooks is that they rarely take it on themselves to interfere with the letter of the sahib's menu, but, treating him as incomprehensible, just do what they are told. So the mouse-deer appeared for dinner—at least he tried to. Fortunately he advertised his coming before he actually got on to the table—to be instantly and urgently shoo'ed away with a simultaneous and unanimous shout of " Rats ! "

It is when the " land of regrets " has become a memory that one wishes one had taken more opportunity of studying native lore. It is by the jungle pool and the camp fire that the white man is most likely to get past the natural reserve of the Asiatic. And, if a written note is not made at the time, many an interesting trifle may slip the mind.

What about this for people who live in too-much-chicken-farm country :

If you want your neighbour's chickens mysteriously to languish and die, sleep with a little rice in the corner of your mouth all night and give it to the roosters in the morning.

And this for the quack medicine man . . . an aboriginal pick-me-up :

During one of our long tramps in Bastar, on sitting down for a rest, I saw a tired jungle man approach a big tree, up and down the trunk of which numbers of large red ants were busily running. They were of the viciously biting kind that stand up on their hindlegs before driving their jaws through one's skin. Quite unconcernedly (grasp the nettle firmly) the little man kept scooping up and squeezing together handful after handful of the wrathfully struggling insects. When he had a sufficiency he firmly rolled all up into a juicy pill about the size of a young golf-ball ; and, with an effort . . . swallowed it !

Questioned as to this strange behaviour, he gave me to understand that the red-ant bolus was well known as a powerful tonic ; and that it had a bitter-sweet (*khatta-mita*) acidity of taste. Black-ant pills, he naïvely explained, were neither so pleasant nor efficacious. And, by a curious coincidence, I had a copy of *The Pioneer* in camp that contained a dissertation on formic acid.

Chickens and ants having thus happened to get together reminds me that, summoning my servant one day to clear my bungalow bathroom of an unwelcome host of big black biters, he at once introduced a couple of hens—which greedily snapped up what to them were evidently most refreshing morsels.

And now, at last, in mercy to the reader—and to myself—these reminiscences of my most jungly years come to an end. The little that I have to say about pigsticking at Ellichpur follows in a separate musing.

That I should close with Bastar is fortuitous ; for those were neither the favourite nor the last jungles I then roamed. Yet, of all the ineffaceable sights, sounds, scents, tastes that are so swift to bring back old days, the magic of the four-note *koél* cuckoo is among the most compelling ; and the picture that his fluty reiterations have instant power to paint—emerald of river-bed, bronze of thicketty bank, shady green of tall straight-stemmed forest—is that of his chosen haunt, the lovely, rushing, sal-fringed Indravati.

The thinking back, the poring over old jungle diaries, the endeavour—when all the world has gone to bed—to live once more in some of those glorious wilds, with the set purpose of recapturing some of their elusive charm, have their lesson : the realities reappear ; the disadvantages—some there must be—take their place over against the joys. Those days belong to a very different stage of our life ; and physically to repeat them might but break the glamour of their spell.

Yet is there deep satisfaction in the thought, the knowledge

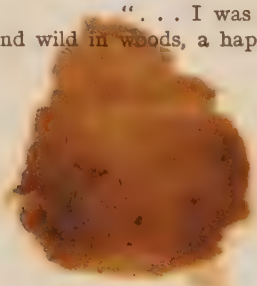
that in a hundred, aye, a hundred times a hundred years hence, those solitudes—insalubrious, lacking natural wealth, of little value to modern man and his works, of none at all to his increasingly synthetic, chemico-mechanic, super-civilised descendants-to-be—are likely to remain utterly unchanged.

And by that time who can doubt that climate will have re-asserted its briefly challenged power, that most of India will then be inhabited by and left to its natural type of humanity, reverted from an ephemeral Aryan dilution to the age-old forest aboriginal; gunpowder a myth, electrocutionary or atomic lethal methods for none but the few bored and bloodless robot-survivors of the once overcrowded supermen of earth; back to the bow and arrow, to *dhya* cultivation, the flesh of game, wild honey, and jungle fruit.

It is just this enduring constancy of "inanimate" nature, her inflexible laws and abiding reliability, that induce a frame of mind that is perhaps too impatient of the green-fly characteristics of close-herded human nature.

Be these musings what they may, those were by a long way my best years, that is to say, my seven best Indian years; for then in sooth—

"... I was a man,
And wild in woods, a happy savage, ran."



V

SUS CRISTATUS

THERE is difficulty in making much of pigsticking in a narrative way. Ever interesting as descriptions of this magnificent sport may be to an enthusiast, there is liable to be a sameness about them when considered from an uninstructed point of view: a disadvantage shared by the relation of other forms of sport that owe their fascination to the heat of action, and which, if regarded in a detached or too analytical way, may induce what in my youth used to be termed an "Exeter Hall" frame of mind.

Disquisitions and ratiocinations of the "unco' guid" type are likely to lead to far less human doctrines than those that come of the hunting instinct—hot, it is true, but inducing an equally liberal generosity, which is the basis of sportsmanship. In such vein, and not in irresponsible bibulousness, does Fitzgerald's sagacious old Omar "divorce old barren reason from his bed, and take the daughter of the vine to spouse."

To follow the intrusion of this thesis a little farther, can whisky be statutorily forbidden without giving rise to bootleggers? Can the warmer human emotions arbitrarily be close-stoppered in a phial, without distilling some far deadlier essence? Or, to bring it nearer to our case in point, why cannot a horrid old retired pigsticker, hypocritically tending his roses, hear unmoved the degenerate screechings of *Sus domesticus* at the village pork-butcher's—situate, by the way, and if you please, in the closest juxtaposition with the old parish church, graveyard, and glebe!

"Relativity, gentlemen! Proportion, fair sirs!"—as our cock-fighting ancestors used to say.

As raconteur of bygone hog-hunting days I find my style considerably cramped by the fact that since last I tried a hand

some far better work has been published on the subject, for one instance, General Wardrop's epic of the Kadir.

Sometimes, however, within one's own minor experience, incidents occur, a little out of the ordinary, that may afford excuse for loquacity.

Near Ellichpur, especially in the earlier part of our seven jungle years, and before the encroachments that affect even out-of-the-way parts of India had brought about the cutting and clearing preliminary to increased arable acreage, wild pig were fairly numerous. That the supply was maintained from the adjoining Satpuras and their foot-hills will be evident enough. As the dry season wore on, when cultivation, grass, and leafage dwindled towards extinction, most of the pig left the dry and burning plains proper for the amenities of the hill jungles; although there used to be places, even far out on the Berar plain, where extensive *séndhi*, or date-palm thickets, water, and irrigated garden land continued to hold their quota of *Sus cristatus* at all seasons.

Most of our Ellichpur pigsticking was furnished by a series of coverts of this kind that lay only four miles from the Station, on the road leading due west; and that locality was so handy and for some time so good that it rather stood in the way of our farther exploration. That was the Pakhal Naddi, to which I will not further allude, it having already been, twenty-five years ago, the subject of some little idealisation.

Looking back to those days I often feel, mistakenly perhaps, that, keenly as we quartered the gamey country within reach, we might have done even more, particularly with regard to pigsticking. To extend such operations farther afield would, of course, have meant much personal reconnaissance, followed by enlarged "bundobust" in the way of tent-club camp, horses, local shikaris, beat-supervisors, and all the accompaniments necessary for successful sport; also leave for many of us at the same time—which was the chief difficulty.

I remember that the best season, and one all too brief, was at the fag-end of the cold-weather, before the pig had migrated

MEMORIES OF ELLICHPUR

to the hills and when coverts were thinning and the taller crops had been harvested, affording good going across the fields. Earlier than this the wild hog are scattered here and there all over the plains that stand so thick with corn that they laugh at one's efforts to hunt them. However, my diaries show that we enjoyed hog-hunting at most times of the year, depending, of course, on local and climatic conditions. Besides, pig will travel by night far from their hills and back again, in search of good faring; and are sometimes belated. It is in the far southern districts of Berar, in the small blocks of reserved copsewood jungle which I used to visit in the hot-weather for tigers, that I have seen the largest "sounders," or herds of pig. In the bandis of the Wún district, not far from the excellent country that used to be hunted over by the Nagpur Tent Club, they were extraordinarily numerous. There, many a time, on encountering vast droves of pig that moved like skirmishers in long-extended lines through the jungle—having withdrawn from the cultivated country before dawn—I have had to turn back, or sit down and wait before it was possible to proceed through the cover in my early prowlings. One could not get away from them or find their flank to get round; and to follow the porcine host that preceded one, standing truculently at gaze here, scurrying off there with warning grunts, was to scare everything else out of the place. When in the saddle I always carried a hog-spear, but never in that enclosed country did I get a chance, and my mare—a marvellously keen pigsticker—fretted herself into a lather at the sight of such numbers of what she undoubtedly regarded as her own especial prey! Many a sudden dash did we in desperation essay; but never did it result in aught but torn clothing for me and thickly bethorned chest and forelegs for her, while occasionally the spear might be branch-wrenched from one's grip—a particularly dangerous occurrence.

My poor dear "Trilby"! The very name I gave her—she had splendid feet—indicates the period of our heyday together. Where do her poor bones lie? Whither gone that satiny bay

coat? How few of us know the ultimate end of our equine friends!

May her hunting-grounds be ever happy, full of big gallops, big jumps, big boars, such as she so revelled in on earth. In pigsticking the quality of one's mount is at least half the battle; and as I think back—though never, I fear, sufficiently a horse-lover in mere hacking or humdrum times—there still comes a quick pang as I visualise that utterly sweet-tempered, great-hearted mare that gave me such years of her splendid best.

Her turn of speed, her powerful frame quivering under me as she rapidly drew up to the fastest of "traveller" boars; her unswerving courage when charged. Her "looks" on parade, and her joyful snorting sprints in the days when she rushed the "Adjeetant" sahib to mark the flank of the deploying line of sepoys at drill. Even her willing "'tween-shafts" in those (thank heavens!) pre-motor days.

To her, as to her fortunate owner, pigsticking was indeed the king of sports, the sport of kings.

And, of all the glorious days that we shared, one, marred though it was by my own error of judgment, seems to stand out in particular relief.

It was at the height of the Ellichpur hot-weather, in May, when, with many another grateful "evergreen," the mango-trees stood thick with fresh leafage, hung with thousands of fruity racemes, that I sat at midday in solitary state in the adjutant's office in our lines. Without—away from the great trees that shaded that end of the mud barracks and echoed with the monotonous "tunk-tunk-tunk-tunk" of the indefatigable "coppersmith" barbet, stretched the empty regimental parade-ground, shimmering under the intense sunglare that seemed to splash from its super-heated surface like molten metal. Within—the waving punkah; and, bare-foot and white clad, the familiar figures of my sepoy clerks, assistants in the eternal wrestlings with those dreadful practical jokes of the pay examiner. To this depressing but quite seasonable scene suddenly entereth one "Jújé"—at least his head,

thrust hot and dishevelled past the raised bamboo *chik* screening the door, with the cabalistic words—" Sahib ! *Soor !* "—before being wrenched backward by a too zealous orderly in the verandah.

" Hay ! Here ! Come here, you old ' soor-ka-butcha,' " we shout, in the elegant Eastern phraseology, as his grin reappears. " Under ow ! (come inside). . . . Did you say ' soor ' ? "

" Oh ! Sahib ! Yes, and . . . *such* a pig ! Ah-há ! *Oh-hó !* José groans, as with internal pains. BAP-RÉ-BAP ! (Father—oh-Father !) *Jaldi* ao, sahib, arré, *jaldi* ! " (come quickly, oh dear, quickly).

" H'm ! Well, let's hear all about it "—for Mr. José (yclept something quite different at birth as one of the Indian " outcaste " class, though later, under miraculous conversion and baptism, raised to hidalgo rank as a native co-religionist of ancient Portugal) is suspect of shooting pig nocturnally with a gaspipe gun, and I am one of the chief inquisitors.

Satisfied that José's *khabr* is not merely an attempt to curry favour or babu-wise " throw the dust in my eye," messengers soon hasten away to the mess and bungalows, three-quarters of a mile distant, with urgent orders also for my syce (native groom), mare, couple of hog-spears, shikar coat and topi, and I get down again to that " general state of accounts," fervently desiring the pay-wallah, with his game of noughts and crosses, at the point not of my pen but of my spear. . . .

Half an hour later Mr. José, who had at increasingly frequent intervals yawned loudly in the verandah, again put an ugly snout inside the office, and, apparently suffering from an acute form of St. Vitus's dance, moaned heart-brokenly of the dangers of delay. My own requirements were complete ; but the rest of the Ellichpur Tent Club were not. Some of the keenest, it is true, were away on leave ; and, as for others, I saw, through the chik, one of the returned orderlies make a significant sign to the miserable José : he inclined his head sideways, placed it on the palm of his hand, and closed his eyes.

Well, it was wrong. It was unfair to piggy. I ought

personally to have routed out at least one other "spear." But time pressed; the groans in the verandah were distracting; . . . and a still small voice whispered insidiously of the glories of tackling a big boar single-handed!

So, José, having preceded me with spare hog-spear to a rendezvous, I hacked off alone into the shimmering glare of the country due east of the lines.

It was just an ordinary seasonable midday of those parts. The *shade* temperature would not be more than 110°, and the burning wind, the regular hot-weather wind, that then prevails during all the sun-up hours, blew strong and steady from the west. An intense, crackly dryness pervaded everything. The vault of the sky was of a strangely deep purplish-grey, black almost, against which the hills, their bases four miles or so distant, wavered vaguely, half-miraged. The very atmosphere one could actually see, as it flowed swiftly by, its tide-like lines all a-quiver like the air above some super-heated smoke-stack. Before me, leading gradually away to the foot-hills, a rough and parched undulating expanse of yellow-white withered grass—not a drop of water for miles—seamed with small sandy or stony nullahs that, shallowish and scrub-bordered here, become ever deeper and more heavily bushed as the hills are approached. A distant roaring, and a large "dust-devil," or whirlwind, is gyrating along in conventional waterspout form, its base tearing fiercely at everything within reach, its apex slowly releasing a centrifugal shower of the leaves and debris raised aloft.

Not that the heat yet disturbed mare or rider in the least. It was not what one would choose, if avoidable; but there was no oppressiveness. The moderate C.P. hot-weather has its compensations, a sporting time of year; and the nights are very seldom bad. Quite different in all respects to the summer days and nights of the Punjab and North-West Frontier, a futilely useless season which, in years to follow, I cordially and increasingly loathed; far hotter, and nothing whatever to lure one out into the country-side.

There now came into view the leper asylum of Kothári—

one of those devotedly charitable, personally tended institutions of the now "unwanted" white man—and presently the figure of José rose from the scanty shade of a bush, pointed northward, and took the lead. . . .

By Jove! That noble hidalgo was right. It certainly was a "mighty boar" that materialised grey-chapped from a bright green *karúnda* bush and stood, as though carved in black marble, against the pale grass a hundred yards away. His curiously sneering face (caused by the tusks that half lift his upper lip) points straight ahead, but the corner of his quick little eye is on us; and soon there is a brief tilt of the great head, a short, dissatisfied grunt, and he trots down into a nullah.

Already the mare has spotted him—her ears prick; she blows a little through distended nostrils; her tail is up, I know; and she passages excitedly, tossing her head, and snatching at the bit.

No pig, certainly not one like that, is to be diverted one jot or tittle from his point, from his intended bourne, his set purpose. I have, it is true, guided by José's good harbouring, manœuvred so as to get between the pig and the hills, but he has seen me, and nothing on earth will now turn him, until he wheels to fight. It is simply a matter of time. The nearer he gets to the hills the worse for me and the mare. We leap at once into our stride.

Riding cunning to start with, I plan to jump down on him as he trots quickly along the nullah bed: but he bobs up the far bank with the wonderful sidelong leap of his kind, and is away as we draw level with his course. Two can do that. We too are soon down and up, and close on his tail. There is no room here for a dash; the riding is too tricky, all broken ground, and calling for collected control of the mare's feet. Presently a small space opens out, and we are on to him at once; but, just as quickly, there is a grunt and a jink. Just for a moment he is clear, diving down and up another bank; but soon his broad back is elastically see-sawing close in front of us once more.

And a proper boar he is, in sooth! A huge fellow! Brownish rather than black; no corpulent sugar-cane pig of the sort that can be "blown" and forced to fight, but a "traveller," in fine fettle, with an enormous upstanding quiff, or shock of curling brow-bristles—*Cristatus!*

But there is no time to waste. Another half-mile and he will be laughing at us. His retreat has got to be stopped quick, and no mistake. Some sort of a spear has got to be put in, somehow; that will rile him to instant fight. Indeed, he has put up with our hustling thus long solely on account of the increasing amount of cover he gets from the interminable bushy nullah tangles, shallow though they be at present. Trust him for a close knowledge of his country and all the arts of piggy wile! Seems as if he had been ridden before! But I don't remember the look of him.

Another little open flat looms ahead. In go the spurs; instantly responds the mare; down comes the spear; next moment we shall be right into him, when—*jink!* and like lightning he cuts right across our bows and goes headlong over a steep-cut, rather deep bank. The mare, changing feet, follows him, landing comfortably on a bank of shingle.

Just here the nullah forks; and, the pig having disappeared, we gallop up the wrong branch. But this mistake leads to luck; for, as soon as we had spotted how matters lay, and got on to the ridge separating the watercourses, a much better line opened out in front. Giving the mare her head, and trusting to the boar maintaining his grim course for the hills—but at reduced speed (as we were not now on his tail)—I cracked on the pace, and presently, catching sight of a dark shape moving along just where expected, came round in a half-circle that would bring us right in front of him.

Cantering down a slight incline that shelved to the dry watercourse, we saw his great high-held whiskered face come forging steadily along through the grass.

"Got him!" everything seemed all at once to shout; for instantly one could glimpse the high, perpendicular barrier of the bank to his right and the open going to his left, while we

SUS CRISTATUS

were straight in his front! A position that would make the youngest sow demonstrative. We had him!

And so, as the great strokes of the mare's hind-feet drive back the dust and stones and hurl us forward, a sudden change transforms the appearance of the pig. His eye is on us at once. He is suddenly all "hackles." He swerves strongly and directly towards us. His whole front looms up menacingly, furious short bounds turn him into a porcine torpedo (one that can rise high in air!) and three or four deep and malevolent grunts leave his gnashing mouth.

This is, of course, the most favourable opportunity for a practically clean kill; for, barring accidents or bungling, one just avoids spearing in the head, and the momentum of such weighty, rapidly approaching bodies means that that terrible weapon, a firmly held and well-directed spear—the reader will see that I refer to the 8-foot hog-spear of the Deccan—will traverse the biggest boar completely. No thrust is necessary—or desirable.

How one's spear *can* disengage after such a stroke is well-nigh inexplicable. When one overtakes and spears a pig travelling in the same direction as one's horse, the weapon comes away as in tent-pegging when the peg is carried; particularly if one's mount is fast, when, galloping "all out" alongside the pig, it is gloriously possible to turn him heels over head, like a shot rabbit; but in the event of great penetration and a charging boar weighing well over 200 lbs., perhaps nearer 300, the shaft is likely to splinter, no matter how new the tough male bamboo. Alas, unlucky day, José certainly carried my spare, but it was never required.

At the very moment of closing with the boar, the point already within about a couple of feet of his shoulder, the mare swerved ever so slightly in avoiding a prickly bush: and I got home too far back, and rather high. The whole angle of incidence of horse and pig had altered in that fraction of time and I had had to reach out at him. I felt the bay-leaf blade jar on something hard; the boar was slewed right

round, and rolled over on his left side ; the spear disengaged quite easily ; and next moment we were pulling up in great props, away down the nullah-bed.

Losing no time in getting back to the scene of encounter, no pig was to be seen. But his natural line and the available cover again served as guides. Quickly cantering along the higher ground, and keeping a sharp look-out, we shortly caught sight of the foe : and again the mare saw him as soon as I did. He was going strong, at a busy trot ; but did not increase his pace as we came up, and soon I could see that he was badly blown—and shaken. Otherwise, as yet, he showed little sign of his wound.

I was now particularly anxious that he should not back into a bush, of which there were many about. In such a position, as I had recently had reason to remember, a pig is very dangerous. He rests, pulls himself together, and on the first opportunity out he dashes, and, doing his instant, vicious damage, is quickly back again under cover.

If you can and do approach him mounted, you are likely to get your horse badly cut in taking a charge at the halt or slowly. If you dismount and go in afoot—well, it usually takes two men to tackle a bushed boar ; for, unless practically *hors de combat*, his weight will be too much for you and he will probably come right up the spear (which of course has no guard) in his determination to get you. Moreover, two horses can be coupled more quickly and securely, nose to croup respectively, than one can be haltered ; thus, if alone, and hurried, your single mount may wander away, and, should the pig do ditto, you are utterly " left."

I therefore rather " nursed " my bristly friend, trying to edge him into some position where we could pounce on him with effect ; but he was very clever, and the ground and bushes were getting far more troublesome. It was not long before the exertions of all three of us in that blazing heat—two o'clock of a hot-weather day !—the continual circling, dodging, swerving, lifting the mare along, wrenching her round again, had its inevitable effect.

Slower and slower we moved. At times we even trotted! And ever that old boar *just* had the better of us. We could just *not* get in at him. His jinking evasions, slow as they had become, seemed to be timed to a hair.

It is impossible to describe our final exhaustion. I was in good outdoor condition, and very spare; likewise the mare. Can the reader who has not had similar experience, under similar conditions, imagine what this sort of thing means? For sheer "gruelling," no polo, with its periodical "easy" between each "chakkar," can be "in it" with such "lone hand" work. Very soon it comes ever harder on the rider; it falls to him to inspire, lift on the mere animal, when its physical bolt is shot.

The sustained violence of action and the tropical sun seemed to have drained my body of the last drop of its moisture content. Panting, half-blinded by the profuse sweat that had now dried in briny smears, mouth agape and all glued up with sordes of caked saliva, my veins seemed to be filled with *treacle*. My bridle arm was *lead*.

The boar, moving on "interior lines," had immeasurably the advantage. It was we who had to conform to his moves, travel at least three to his one. He was beating us. It could not last much longer. For the first time in my experience I felt that the mare was failing: she had stopped lathering, and her coat seemed to stare.

Now we are working him down a slope leading to one of those accursed nullahs—when suddenly things open up. Free of bushes, the ground slopes gently to the watercourse—here wider, and sandy. Reaching it, the pig slows down, making heavy weather of the soft going. Shouting, yelling to the mare, but producing only a sort of croak, I gather her up with my knees in yet another "last effort" and urge her madly, desperately at him. As her hooves crash on the shelving shingle-bank I lift her with the spurs. We are right on top of the old blighter. Whoop! *We have him at last*—

But no! By gum, *he* has *us*!

Halting as he hears our whirlwind approach, he turns. His

jumping-powder is all gone, he cannot now leave the ground, but he lumbers at us furiously, silently, head high, mouth wide open and covered with foam. His failing strength and the mare's sand-checked speed beggar us for the second time this hapless day; his ill-executed rush carries him too much in front, craning forward I am barely able to put in the feeblest of points, right across our bows he blunders, the mare's knees strike pig and spear and everything she can possibly foul, and we all go rolling over.

Sticking to my weapon for all I'm worth, I struggle clear and leap to my feet with the most urgent alacrity . . . but, to my great relief, a bristly stern is retreating slowly, very slowly, ominously; and I am very very careful to let it go at that. It trots slowly away, reaches a sheer red wall of the nullah, seems to clamber right into it, and is gone. . . .

All the pig in India would not now tempt me back into the saddle. The mare was surely foundered! Splay-legged, head down, tail out, she stood; bent-kneed, tottering, rocked back and forth by her bursting lungs.

Unbuckling the girths, I dragged off the sopping, stinking saddle and cast it and myself to the ground. But the sand was red-hot. Rising stiffly, I led the mare off it—hullo! she's lamed! . . . thought so! . . . but not cut—and reached an overhanging bush. Shade! Not much—but . . . down I go, full-length on my back . . . off with my sweat-soaked topi, balance it between face and the sun, clasp hands behind neck. . . .

Gradually, painfully, the swallowing mechanism gets going once more, but the front of my mouth seems permanently tanned or something. . . .

Good heavens! That priceless Abdul put an *orange* in my shikar-coat pocket when he sent it me! IT IS STILL THERE! A BIG, LOOSE-SKINNED, MAGNIFIED TANGERINE, NAGPUR ORANGE! . . .

"Look at that mare! Shaking herself! Pawing! What about a roll? Here, old dear, let's have that leg . . . pooh!

rog, bruised sole, nothing much. Let's walk home quietly ogether. Not our day to-day, is it? Here's something ice "—and a "pig" of orange is pushed between those poor lubbery lips. They flubber it. It drops, all covered with and; but is retrieved, blown, and wiped clean; and doesn't he love it now! And another. . . .

We never heard of that boar again. Taking the spear vith me, I had found that he had gone up a narrow sort of drain to the higher ground; where his tracks disappeared. José was nowhere to be seen. I got him at my bungalow ater, and he accompanied a number of men who went out n the evening and tried to find the pig. They drew a blank, and there were no vultures. The Korkus who live at the base of the hills and are keen on even the deadest of pigs never found him. Hardy brute; let us hope he got right away, and possibly, well, just possibly, recovered.

And now for the counsels of perfection, from the fine hypothetical seat in the comfortable theoretical chair. Concerning his recent failure, what *ought* A. to have done?

I think—and I wonder if old pigstickers will agree—that he erred in "nursing" that pig after the first spear. Ought he not to have hustled harder than ever? Delay was all to the pig's advantage. That first spear had undoubtedly taken the jump out of him. And even if he *had* been driven to an awkward bay, might that not have led to better opportunities of killing him later?

Well, as the old-fashioned Italian organ-grinder and the Brindisi boat-minstrels never used to tire of informing us in "*Mar-ga-ri*":

"Quello chè fatto è fatto, un ne parlammo addio!"

As I told myself at the time, and never had reason to alter—

"Solo pigsticking is a sure cure for obesity; but from the pig's point of view it is not a sporting proposition."

VI

BUFFALO AND CHITAL

LACK of rain was playing havoc with my trip to a certain secluded corner of the Central Provinces, the main object of which was Bison; and in despair I awoke each morning to gaze into an exasperatingly clear sky, with gloomy foreboding that I should have to return without one of those big bison bulls, of which I had heard so much and come so far to secure. The rain was long overdue. But without the new grass, without the softening rain, little could be done, scattered as the bison were over this tinder-dry wilderness of hills to which I had penetrated. In a normal year the *chóta barsát* (small rains) never failed to bring them in large numbers to the plateaus above my camp; but those delectable hunting-grounds, alas! still lay scorched and dry, and our daily reconnaissances in every direction had met with scant success.

It was under those conditions that my thoughts turned to other things, and, as it happened, a party of mango-hunting villagers from the great plains to the south had passed our camp, with the information, imparted to my indefatigable agents, that a series of heavy thunderstorms had fallen on the "Buffalo River" on whose bank their village lay.

I now remembered that, lying sleepless in the still heat, three nights previously, the dull reverberations of a distant storm and its remote glimmerings of lightning had for a while raised pleasurable anticipations, and that I had prayed that those disturbances might work round to my bison hills and bring the longed-for rain. Fresh grass, said the villagers, had undoubtedly sprung up now on the banks of the Buffalo River; and these early precursors of the approaching monsoon never

failed to attract the wandering herds of buffaloes, so difficult to locate during the dry hot-weather season. Besides this, a tiger had been killing cattle near the villages, of late, and there were many spotted deer in those jungles.

And so it was that, leaving the bulk of my impedimenta in my valley of the bison country, I packed up about ten days' supplies, and set off towards that of the buffaloes. Buffaloes, tigers, and spotted deer I had shot in former years, but for the then more attractive bison I must await the rain, when I would return to his favourite plateaus.

The exceedingly rough nature of the country necessitated short marches, so it was not until the evening of the third day that we arrived on the scarped edge of the hilly country and gazed out over the vast plains below. The coolies, their feet troubled by the rocky nature of the soil which we had been traversing, had lagged behind; and travelling absolutely light as I was, without tent, and settling down for the night anywhere, close to the nearest water-hole that could be found, I must wait for them and bring them along in my own company—if I wished to avoid the worries incident on separation from the food and kit. I sat down on a large boulder that overhung the stony descent and looked out through the warm dry air. Around me the parched jungle crackled in the heat, and the strident screeching of the large cicadas shrilled on the silence. The hills that had accompanied my peregrinations hitherto, yellow, leaf-strewn, bamboo and sapling-clad, took a sudden dip, and below me led shelving into a steep narrow valley that was filled with the bright green foliage of mango and kowa trees. Our path seemed to follow this glen. That water must be there was evident from the sounds of life that floated up at intervals, the calls of birds that now woke to their brief period of activity ere the hot sun should go out below the far horizon of the plains, and the whoopings of a party of monkeys, with now and then the staccato crow of a jungle cock. Below, the hills sloped gently off, purple with dry jungle, and a patch or two of deserted cultivation led the eye onwards to a long green

fringe of trees. That then was the Buffalo River, which at this point bends into within a few miles of the far hills. Through the heat-haze, indications could be observed, far away, of some clearings on its banks which my little black guide informed me were the scattered fields that surrounded his village ; and something in the aspect of that portion of the vast flat jungly sea told the practised eye that rain had fallen and grass sprouted. Following the dim windings of the river, opened out as on a map, our gaze wandered away for many long leagues till it rested on a faint mauve cloud-like line of hills—ah ! and a vista of happy recollections opened before the mind's eye. Six years, and more since, we had spent such happy days in those wilds—yes, there is the peaked hill above our old camp at M——, sixty, seventy miles off, perhaps, but unmistakable as ever.

I started a cigar, and sat there full of those delightful feelings that come to the Indian shikari at times during his happy wanderings, and serve with their ever-fresh memories to bind his solitary soul so fast to the country of his adoption—solitary I say, for it is only when quite alone that the spirit of the jungle emerges shyly from its thousand secret hiding-places and ventures awhile to touch us with its rare influence. And at such moments what inspiration breathes, what soothing sense of deepest peace, of perfect content, that whispers to us to cast off our civilisation and return to the old wild prehistoric existence of our common ancestors. That an alien land should speak to us thus compellingly would be strange, were it not that nowadays it is only in remote corners of the earth that this spirit may now find its sufficiently secluded home.

The arrival of the coolies with my baggage brings these ruminations to a close. Poor fellows, they have had a hard afternoon, and weighed down as each pair is with the bending bamboo, from which hangs one or other of the various packages of my kit, they stagger onwards down the rocky path that leads to the spring below. The moon hangs large and bright in the after-glow of sunset, and after the men have had

a drink we shall complete our march comfortably in the cool of early night.

On the Buffalo River bank I put up in a very excellent grass shed which has been erected for my residence.

After dinner, which the ever-faithful Abdul produces from his magic *boccus*, we have a chat with the local shikaris, who squat in the moonlight round my chair. The buffaloes, they say, are not "in" yet, but will be here very soon. The village shikari saw a herd in the jungles to the west yesterday, and doubtless this new grass is attracting them. "Where do the buffaloes go in the dry weather?"—"Ah! *sahib*, who can tell *that*? But now that the rain has fallen and all through the wet season, this is their abode! do they not break every fence and destroy all our crop!" And so it is the old story —"Only come here in the rainy season, sahib, and you shall see that our words are only too true—*wah! wah!*"—*óhó*!

On the third morning of my sojourn at this place, having as yet seen only a very shy herd of cow buffaloes, and many chital in the dry jungles to the northward, I set off again at the first signs of dawn, taking the line of the Buffalo River itself. This stream, an affluent of the Great River, is a typical central Indian stream—high jungly banks, and sandy bed broken by masses of rock and some patches of reedy grass here and there. At intervals in its dry course were pools, but the majority of these were now in a truly horrible condition, the extremely heavy and local deluges of thundery rain having washed all the accumulated debris of the jungle into them, and evaporating, left them fœtidly black and repulsive, to fester in the hot sun. Of them no animal could drink, no, not even the jungle-pig.

The odour of the reeking puddles was, however, quite outclassed by my shikari of local fame. Never, in all my long association with my Aryan, Dravidian, or Kolarian brethren have I met his like. Mephitic vapours, whose colour-scheme must undoubtedly have ranged from vivid purple to rich veridian, surrounded and emanated from his oleaginous person, and the savours released by the occasional shifting of

a foul grey cloth with which he had decked his shoulders acted as an automatic ejector to my interior economy. It was with joy to me, therefore, that we arrived at a fine pool of clear water, and my friend—who seemed to look on it as some religious ceremony enjoined by the sahib—was requested to indulge in a thorough tubbing.

Curiously enough, this "order of the bath" brought luck, for, on proceeding a short way further, we discovered the tracks of a big bull buffalo, who had visited the pool during the night! His great tracks, delightfully fresh—for he could not long have preceded us—led off up the steep bank, and away into the green grass country. Jálú, now relieved of his truly awful smell, soon gave evidence of very superior powers of tracking.

The bull, after leaving the river had gone wandering off in a rather haphazard way, and his track turned and twisted all over the place in quite a puzzling fashion; indeed so aimless were his wanderings, and, judging from the tracks, so slow, that the sharpest look-out had to be kept, lest we should blunder in on him unawares. So, keen although I was to put into practice the buffalo-tracking powers, which I fondly imagined I had acquired in former years, my rôle was obviously to watch the surrounding jungle, while Mr. Jalu "pugged." Creeping along in fairly thick jungle at a snail's pace with every sense on the very much alert is quite exhausting work, as I could well remember of yore; and thus we penetrated the buffalo's retreat for a distance of some three miles. At one spot we approached a water-hole, indicated by the tracker, with infinite caution; to find that the bull had indulged in a mud-bath, and emerged leaving a wet track garnished with blobs of mire to urge us to further efforts. Presently we found ourselves approaching a low hill, and here, the rainfall having been scanty, the soil was dry, and covered with patches of perfectly dry yellow grass. Jalu now gave me a proof of his capabilities, and I shortly arrived at the conclusion that he was the best tracker I had ever met, with the exception, perhaps, of little Raoji, one of my Satpura

friends. With hardly a mistake he ran the track steadily along, which by this time crossed and recrossed the fresh trail of several other buffaloes, which had overlaid those of the bull; but, with me, he was sorely annoyed that these new factors had intruded themselves. A bull alone and by himself is difficult enough, but a whole herd—well, it spells complication.

By this time sweat was rolling off me in streams, the sun pouring down his piercing rays with unusual vigour; and I began to realise that this following of the bull on which we had entered that morning under quite excellent conditions was perhaps to be one of those well-known all-day affairs. Long before this he should have lain up, or at least halted; and we could only suppose that the proximity of this herd, of which we saw traces, had rendered him restless.

Another mile of cautious tracking, and we once more entered the belt of country affected by the thunderstorm—fresh green grass reappeared, the trees were in partial leaf, and a breeze had sprung up; which, however, unfortunately blew on our backs. Not long after this Jalu raised a finger!—and we halted. A mud-hole, said he, was not far ahead of us; and I had better creep in and see if the bull had halted in its vicinity. Getting round the wind, I cautiously approached a large tree by which the approximate position of the mud-wallow had been indicated; and, using my binoculars from afar—lo! the grey-blue back of a buffalo! We had him, then? At any rate, here he was; and also the end of our troublesome following of his journeyings.

Retreating softly, I scanned the surroundings, for the best solution of the question of approach. The mud-hole lay in a shallow depression shaded by trees and quite open all round—no cover of any kind within a hundred yards of it—except directly on the wind!

After some prowling about, however, I discovered that the lie of the ground to my right might permit of stalking within shot. With the glass, from my first position, I could distinguish a huge, smug, mud-daubed countenance directly facing

me ; so the undulation to his left would be the most practicable line to take.

The jungle here, as indeed all around, was of the open order ; little undergrowth, hard soil, and large, straight-stemmed trees. Creeping round, once more I guided my approach by the long black horns, whose tips protruded from the mud-hole ; and at last, raising my body slowly, looked carefully over a slight fold of ground.

Ye gods ! About half a dozen buffaloes lay about in the grey ooze of a large wallow, all bedaubed and caked with clayey mud. They lay there within a short hundred yards, unconsciously enjoying their bath, apparently oblivious to external influences, chewing the cud, blowing and wallowing. In vain I searched among them for the bull. Yet his tracks had, when I left them, led straight towards the pool. This before me, then, was merely a herd of cows !

For a long while I watched them from behind a tree, an interested spectator of their behaviour. The one I had first seen, a big cow with fine horns, lay higher than the rest, keeping a careful eye to her front—and I noted with a certain amount of surprise that not a single one of them was posted so as to look down wind ! Thus we could have crept in to almost touching distance without discovery. This fact set me thinking. Was their vulnerable side covered by the bull ? Was *he* lying somewhere down-wind of them !

After a while, unable to discover any sign of the bull with my glasses, I stole cautiously off to reconnoitre further to leeward of the reposing herd, but no success attended my efforts. Finally, just as I was thinking of getting rid of this troublesome lot of cows by some stratagem that would cause them to depart in not too great haste there was a great squelching of mud and thudding of hoof. I ran forward. The herd was just leaving the pool. One or two of the cows had run a short distance ; the others, rising from their mud-bath were staring suspiciously up-wind ; presently a loud snort and a short stampede, and they began moving away, and presently had disappeared. Moving up, I approached the

wallow for investigation, when a cow, accompanied by a calf, ran out of the trees to my right and stopped about a hundred yards away. With her great head thrown up, nose in air, she stupidly regarded my motionless figure. Then there was a sharp snort, and, shaking her ugly head and sharp horns angrily, she lumbered off after her friends, the calf following her closely with loud gruntings.

Having thus got rid of the herd, it remained to see what the bull had done—so Jalu was whistled up. Half an hour's careful search at last revealed what we sought—the bull had left the wallow before my arrival, those cows had then taken possession of the pool, and he had gone off slowly in a northerly direction and therefore away from the path the cows had taken in the flight. So far, so well. But he might have been somewhere near, and, if so, frightened by their snortings. However, this was not to be—and fortune smiled again. The tracks now led steadily away. We covered another mile—and entered an open grass country with clumps of low sapling jungle. At last I could see that Jalu was becoming extremely watchful. "He is here, somewhere," said he, as we slowly glided through the grass, which was only knee-high. Suddenly close ahead there was a quick rush, and my rifle flew to my shoulder as, with a bell of alarm, a fine chital stag burst from the jungle and bounded across an open space, followed by a couple of his hinds. An exciting incident, tense as had been our nerves in expectation of our old friend the bull! We had not covered another fifty yards when Jalu sank slowly down into the grass, and simultaneously an enormous grey bull stepped out from behind some little trees two hundred yards away. The buffalo, for 'twas he right enough, halted, gazing long and fixedly in our direction, and must have spotted my own man and the coolie, who followed at a suitable distance, for he immediately shook his head, and started off—first at a trot, and then at a lurching canter—across my front.

But he had not got away yet. Caution being no longer of use, I started to my feet, and, rifle in hand, raced across the grass in a direction that would, I hoped, cut him off. Annoy-

ance and despair lent unwonted swiftness to my legs, and I sprinted and leapt through the grass like a deer. A space of burnt grass opened out before me. I sped over its smooth surface, and at once saw a little dry water-course looming ahead. Darting towards this, I suddenly saw a great black mass blunder out of the fringe of trees bordering it, and canter into the open beyond, a hundred paces away. *Now* was the time. I pulled up short; the bull's huge frame showed up through the thin trees; *Bang*! from the little cordite rifle—and down he goes!

A spasmodic heaving was going on in the grass, and a black horn showed at intervals and was then stilled. I had pulled out my whistle and given two or three sharp "pip-pips" as a signal to my men to advance, when all of a sudden the buff had lurched to his legs and—slowly—was under weigh again. *Bang*! goes the little rifle, then the slight "clicketty—click" of the magazine, and *Bang*! again; and over goes the bull, for good.

"Sweet is pleasure after pain"—thought I as I lay under the shade of the big trees of a long-deserted jungle village hard by. I had fed, smoked, and slept; and now the declining sun tempted us forth again. Camp was six miles away, yet already I could hear the voices of a crowd of villagers from the surrounding hamlets as they rapidly cut up and distributed the mighty carcase of my buff. The great head had already been despatched homewards.

It was six long years since I had seen spotted deer, and so we made for the ground where I had disturbed that stag and his hinds in the morning, with anticipation of a shot.

This jungle reminded me vividly of those in which I had pursued this beautiful deer in the old days—there was the same thigh-deep, yellow grass, the same undulating sapling-grown forest, with clearings, and, sure enough, as I wandered quietly along, the same fine spotted stag trotting gently away over a rise! Leaving the men behind, I followed him cautiously, and marked him into a little copse; then, creep-

ing up, caught sight of his head—a small one—as he stood motionless among the tree-trunks.

Nearer camp, just before sunset, a rush in a small water-course, a bark, and several white tails darting off through the woods directed me to another herd. Coming up with them farther on, as they slowly retired into a belt of forest, I saw that there were three stags, one of them a large dark-coloured fellow with a fine head. The secret of success with chital is to keep on after them slowly and quietly, however much they may have been alarmed, for they soon get over their fright, slow down, and resume feeding. Haste, on the other hand, will spoil any stalk, and, as these deer are very restless, nearly always on the move, and much given to short stampedes, the stalker should beware of being hurried into taking a snapshot under the impression that they are off for good. Another golden rule is—that is to say, unless you have thick grass, etc., to cover you—never to stalk in a squatting or creeping attitude. Chital are accustomed to keep a look-out for all creeping things, and they always watch the ground-line for their chief foes, the tiger and panther, whereas, if the shikari will avoid sidewise movements, and approach properly, behind cover, in an erect attitude, taking no notice of the false alarms so largely indulged in by these deer, he should experience no great difficulty in obtaining an easy shot. With these lessons long ago implanted in my memory, I at length got within eighty yards, and, giving them time, presently had the satisfaction of seeing my friend the master of the herd slowly walk across the open, feeding as he went. A steady aim, a gentle squeeze of the trigger, and the lovely little stag, throwing up his antlered head, sinks down with a bullet in the right place just behind the shoulder. His horns measured 34½ inches.

That night a tremendous thunderstorm, the forerunner of the *pakka barsát* as it turned out to be, raged on the horizon, right over my bison country; and next morning I was on my way back there, bearing with me happy reminiscences of my little jaunt to the river of the wild buffaloes.

VII

PUNKAH AND THERMANTIDOTE

MOST people know what a punkah is; the word is to be found in English dictionaries. But "thermantidote" is less well understood, although the term is self-explanatory. Briefly, it is a large, light, wooden paddle-wheel revolving in a paddle-box for the forcible propulsion of air.

Its function is to reduce the temperature and increase the humidity in one's jealously closed bungalow during the hot-weather droughts by driving air into the house through a porous, moistened screen, set in the only opened doorway and made of the fragrant *khaskhas*, the roots of one of the aromatic andropogon grasses, on which water is sprinkled from time to time.

Motion, in both these cooling devices, depends on the standard Indian dynamic unit—one-coolie power; as standard as may be, that is to say, in a country of irregular values, and probably best expressed by the time required to rouse from a lack-lustre day-dream, receive five pounds of earth in a tiny basket, place it on the head, saunter ten paces in slow time, deliver the goods, return to the starting-point, and subside once more on the "hunkers." Multiply this power-unit by about 300,000,000 (India's potential in coolies) and one begins to understand how—in some fullness of time—things do get done in the gorgeous East.

Electric, hot-air (plenty of that available locally), and other mechanically operated fans now, and for some time past, compete with coolie-power; but still there is nothing quite so satisfactory as a properly hand-pulled punkah.

The use of the thermantidote appears to have declined, even in those parts of the country where exiles once made

themselves really comfortable, while, in the hottest north-western India, I have never set eyes on one. It is true that its use is apt to make too violent a contrast between indoors and out; but, judging from my experience, its absence from the hottest parts of the North-West is because that is where the white man succeeds in making himself less comfortable than anywhere else.

When the punkahs go up you may be sure that the hot-weather has really begun, and in the less blessed parts of the country they sway day and night, as the gibbets erected over out-of-door sitting-out, dining, and sleeping places testify. Good punkahs never stop; but bad ones have a way of breaking down, either in their simple mechanical way or because the motive power has ceased to function. How serious a matter this can be has been revealed in a guest-night ditty of Victorian days, with its pathetic refrain about the place where the punkah-coolie breathed his last. Indeed, unrecorded history has it that once—oh, long, long ago—a simple little punkah-stoppage had indirect but disastrous repercussions on the career of a proud and puissant Viceroy.

To the dweller on the hot-weather plains the bed-punkah is an all-important affair; and one of the least soothing experiences is to wake up bathed in sweat for the *n*th time, and now, instead of reaching up and jogging furiously at the motionless frill, to tiptoe revengefully forth and find your punkah-coolie comfortably prone, with his big-toe-joint hooked into the end of the pulling rope and contracting feebly and automatically in rhythm with his snores.

A truce, however, to such trifles, for, to those who live always in temperate climes, punkahs, thermantidotes, long chairs, and ice . . . ice that rattles delightfully in a long, lovely, fizzy tumbler, with a *pau* (quarter "peg" measure) at the bottom of it, matter very little. My sole reason for the passing reference is "atmospheric," so that, in that year of grace 1904 I may lead my guest out of the blinding hot-weather noon (say 110°) into my darkened, cooled bungalow (say 85°) wave him to a long cane chair, see that he has a tall tumbler

and a box of cheroots at his elbow, and let him begin to get an idea of "the long, long Indian day," with its disadvantages, its alleviations, its boredom or its peace, and its wonderful opportunities, free from trivial interruptions, for reading, study, dabbling in the arts, map-porings and dreams of future shikar-trips, or merely working out a system for spotting the winners.

As for the no-hobby man (funny stories here obtrude), he can at full leisure curse the heat, the everlasting *tunk, tunk, tunk* of the coppersmith barbet, the crescendo rising scale of the koél or shrieking "brain-fever bird," curse everything, curse himself, bleat of his next home leave, run up his wine-bill, and hog away the day in stertorous slumber till he wakes like a boiled owl to twinges of the liver that he jolly well deserves.

If, as is likely, my visitor has risen at crow-caw, a short nap will now do him no harm, followed by a plunge in tub or swimming-bath, then over to the mess for tiffin, a game of billiards, a look at the illustrated papers, and back to the bungalow, till it is time to prepare for the evening exercise—game or ride. Bachelordom and grass-widowerhood now prevail, for here is no place for Englishwomen at this time of year.

As in other musings, my intention is to proceed as chronologically as possible. For instance, do not here expect to find criticism of *Mother India*, published in 1927; let us bring to that the riper adjudication of later Indian years. One's first fourteen Indian years hardly entitle one to more than the few general impressions given here; for a whole lifetime is too short for a subject of such size as "India"—and that before the complications of "*swaráj*" and the "reforms" had been planned. This chapter, therefore, contains only such thoughts as may occur to a young "sepoy officer" with experience limited to the country included within the lines Bombay-Delhi-Nagpur-Secunderabad-Bellary-Bombay; and that, indeed, may be considered small excuse for oracular utterance. At the same time it may be remarked that a mere soldier's

zeal for going wide about the country-side, with youthful inquisitiveness and enthusiasm of the "lure of the East," may prove at least as generally informative as the more bureaucratic experience of a young civil officer learning the mechanism of his job and restricted to a single province—or part of one. In parenthesis it may be noted that the wider knowledge of a further twenty years served only to confirm, if to enlarge, most of those earlier views; and the aggregate will be offered (in due course) for what it is worth—an unofficial aspect of some Indian questions as they presented themselves to an interested, lifelong onlooker, and, as such, free from some of the reservations that have been known to gag worshippers under the pagoda-tree.

I completed my fourteenth year's service just before leaving "Junglypur." That is about the best time of one's Indian years. By then one ought to have become thoroughly anti-toxined against the tropical diseases that make one's first ten years or thereabouts so chanceful; has probably been home on longish leave; been through the mill of regimental staff employ; has, possibly, committed matrimony, though not yet fully confronted with the pathetic problems that come with growing children and the fact that India is the direct antithesis to a white man's country; and is probably still imbued with enthusiasms and elasticity as yet untinged with the inevitable disillusionment of the "land of regrets."

In those days, too, life was much simpler and cheaper. What matter that in such out-of-the-way places one lived in a thatched beehive bungalow; walls of sundried brick scantily plastered and colour-washed; poor, ill-fitting woodwork, windows, and doors; no fireplace (because never required!); a rammed mud floor, covered primarily with bamboo-strip matting; a whitewashed, stretched ceiling-cloth overhead, bagging in places and often stained with traces of tragedy where legions of mice, rats, bats, palm-civets or "toddy-cats," snakes and scorpions crawled, writhed, squeaked, hissed, and (the tread of their little feet plainly visible) ran resounding life-and-death races. White ants that, "boring from within"

and cunningly camouflaged like their human prototypes, consumed away almost anything but metal or stone that was not meticulously "insulated" from walls and floor. Tiny, slithering "fish-insects" that gnawed a secret living off books and pictures. Tucktoo lizards—more power to *them*—that stalked flies and moths, and rapped them to death on the room walls. Mosquitoes. And eye-flies, diminutive, irritating, perpetually hovering just in front of one's eyeball, and occasionally falling in.

No water-taps, no electric light or gas. A dusty dryness that desiccates and cracks incredibly. A moisture that grows cabbages on your boots in a night, and liberates myriads of flying pests. Generally innutritious food, and, failing very special arrangements, particularly poor meat.

Yet a shout brought running, attentive servants of the old and faithful kind that remained with one long years in succession, a father-to-son affair, one for each little job, in the restful Eastern manner—orderly, table-man, valet, bath-and-water-man, gardener, washer-man—and grooms; and, in a married establishment, another table servant, cook, and mate, "lady's maid," nurse, seamster, and the other "behind-the-bungalow" retainers. Twelve or fifteen in all; and their combined pay would total under £150 a year!

Thus, what one missed in civilised appliances was compensated for by wonderful service. One bathed in a galvanised tub placed in a curbed, cemented enclosure in the bathroom, one to each bedroom, that drained to a hole in the wall ('ware snakes!) leading out any-old-where in the compound or running into the garden as irrigation. But here again the single shout of "Bath!" meant that miraculously soon one found everything ready, down to the exact water temperature that was one's fancy, and all to hand for a luxurious "tub" and change of clothing, properly valeted. Sybarites could have the very clothes put on them by a "dressing-boy."

A little personal supervision and house-pride, a clever cook, the best of paraffin lamps, and again the many hands, indoors and out, soon coped with all but the basic drawbacks, and

modified even them ; so that to the casual observer our makeshift homes were comfortable and picturesque, if not luxurious and beautiful.

In the Station Mess—I am describing the smaller Hyderabad Contingent garrisons of all arms—which was always a very comfortable one, were included the amenities of a Club that also ran games, gymkhánas, and sporting requirements, in which we were able to enjoy the company of the few civil officers of the district.

Life in larger Indian stations was, of course, less "jungly," and Bolárum, the headquarters of our Force, with its beautiful Mess-house, Ball-room, and the best string band in the East, connected up with Secunderabad and Chadarghát into an eleven-mile stretch of British and Indian military and civil quarters, beyond which, along the great boulevard of the Hussén Ságar lake, came the large native city of Hyderabad, Deccan, the capital of the Nizam's Dominions.

Ellichpur, though such a jungly little place, lay only thirty miles from the main Bengal-Nagpur railway, and within easy reach of Bombay, Poona, etc. One could leave Ellichpur after lunch and arrive very early next morning in the "Gateway of India," only fourteen days from London.

Towards the end of the rains the social life of the station revived ; with seven pleasant months to look forward to ; an environment of sahibs, with similarity of circumstancing and tastes. Nobody was rich ; but all had sufficient means to maintain a comfortable and relative standard of living, and consequently of interests.

When a small minority lives thus in the capacity of rulers, of administrators of a huge, alien, and generally inferior populace, with far greater ethnological difference between rulers and ruled than existed during the Roman occupation of Britain, it would be unnatural if it did not develop a somewhat Olympian outlook. Not that there is anything inherently unmoral or undesirable in this attitude, by which, indeed, the peoples of India have benefited, in mutual respect and good-will with the agents and upholders of the wonderful

Pax Britannica that they have so long experienced: in fact, a decline in this quality of the sahibs would disturb and upset the Indian people, whose comfort largely depends on the former's impartiality.

Then remember that the British Indian official is practically a stranger to the domestic side of English life; he seldom sees old people nodding by the fire, hears few children, meets no young people under about twenty years of age, and few classes but his own. Again, he cannot avoid being influenced to a certain extent by the idiosyncrasies of the people among whom he sojourns so long and whose ways he has to study, their strictly conservative ideals, their ancient code of ethics that is in many ways suitable to their conditions of life. He sees no reason to resent the fact that, for religious reasons at any rate, few orthodox Indians will eat or fraternise with a "European." He sees no harm in the fact that the soldier caste looks down on the commercial; indeed, as regards the *sáhukár* (financier and money-lender) he is probably of the same mind. The fact that servants of the Crown are forbidden to engage in trade, and the basic reasons for the prohibition, may also lend a certain bias to his ideas.

It would indeed be surprising if all this did not give him an outlook rather different from those who have never or seldom left their own country. And that is what makes it almost impossible, at his age on retirement, to readjust his values; particularly if the homeland values have radically altered, or been subjected to tergiversation since his boyhood.

Periods of home leave—delightful little sailings on summer seas—do not afford a true perspective of home life; nor does that first pathetic condition of mind in which the wanderer returns to settle at last in the wondrous homeland.

Ellichpur had a notoriety for unhealthiness; yet, in all those years, we lost but one of our number there from sickness—and he neither civil servant nor soldier.

The rainy season and its immediate aftermath were the times when one had to be particularly careful. The cloudy

damp, absence of sunshine, and great increase of insects—especially the house-fly—caused increased contamination of food and drink, and every puddle was a potential cradle for mosquitoes. The sanitation of the cantonment and its bazars was strictly enforced; but the utter insanitation of the surrounding country hatched and spread disease. Bowel complaints were worst, and typhoid very likely—as almost every native is a "carrier" with a long history of birth and breeding in it. It may seem unkind to banish from one's compound the children of one's servants—but these are by far the most dangerous neighbours the white man can have.

By painful experience one soon learned to look after one's own health. Besides, shikar expeditions take one far from medical aid. At the bad time of year a chill, badly cooked, injudicious, or too much food, excess of condiments, climatically unsuitable liquor, unboiled water or milk, too much fruit, even over-exhaustion, depression, irritability or uncontrolled temper, quickly predisposed one to disease.

Few young men escape having to pay their footing for eventual immunity from tropical ill-health. If one has won through in unhealthy parts of India one looks on the less unhealthy regions as positive sanitaria!

It was noticeable that the hearty-looking, beefy, juicy boys were by far the easier victims—not wiry enough for exacting climates. Malaria seems to love 'em. However, with a little luck, a little care, and a gradual inuring to novel conditions, the Briton seems able to adapt himself to almost any climatic change.

But to hurry the process is always painful, and may be dangerous. Take even the toughest of well-seasoned bodies which is at the time adapted to the beef-and-beer homeland conditions—rich in blood, fleshy, fat-protected, cold-resisting.—Introduce it to the equatorial African coast or to the "summer" of the Indian North-West Frontier, and demand of it only moderate physical effort in the open. The result will be an unpleasant and disconcerting inefficiency.

Then take the same body, purged of the beef-and-beer

complex, and thoroughly adjusted to physical effort in the tropics, and employ it out-of-doors in an English winter, with damp feet, damp clothing, insufficient exercise, and lots of standing about in cold and rain.

Here the immediate result may not be so catastrophic ; but there will be risk and great loss of efficiency until the beef-and-beer condition is restored.

Thus, the exchange of bodily condition must be understood and worked for ; it takes a little time, and refuses to be hurried.

After that, suitable clothing. The old advice of belly warm and head cool. Wear a fairly thick flannel belt next the skin, the ends slightly overlapping and fastened fairly tightly with a couple of vertically adjusted safety-pins, and you will be proof to stomach-chill after sweating or getting wet, and to punkah, or wind-chill at night. Sweat you will ; and must : the more the better. It is Nature's safeguard against many blood-poisons. People in temperate climates don't sweat nearly enough.

A large, thick sola topi of the Cawnpore Tent Club type is ugly but absolutely indispensable ; and it is also advisable to have at least a double thickness of cloth on your shikar coat from nape to skirt, covering the spine.

In looking back to the insalubrity of Ellichpur and the deeper valleys of the Melghat during the malarious season I feel considerable surprise that I came through it all without some permanent loss of health. Yet, allowing for the fact that I had learned to avoid predisposing causes, and, if temporarily knocked out, soon recovered, thanks to a sound constitution and open-air life, was it not simply the effect of mind over matter ? I loved the poor old place, was intensely interested in it, gloried in its shikar, and had no time to spare for bodily ailments.

Distant retrospect is inclined to be indulgent, and the subconscious mind has a magnanimous way of pigeon-holing most old unpleasantnesses, while " filing " the better things of life for handier reference. Thus, very dusty shelves would

have to be searched if I were asked to make a list of my Indian "grouses"—up to 1904: yet there are two fully red-taped documents the curious shapes of which cause them to protrude noticeably from their places, one being docketed *Parsimony, Indian*; and the other *Passages, Price, Prohibitive.*

With regard to the latter, many and prudent officers were driven into debt in order to raise the ruinous cost of the sea passage home and back, which they had to find for themselves—and their families, if any—when taking the leave ordinarily necessary for their health and efficiency. And it seemed incredible that, as was rumoured in club and mess, an administration mindful of its servants' welfare could have continued to pay large mail subsidies to shipping concerns which, *inter alia*, carried passengers to Australia for practically the same fare as was wrung from those going only as far as Bombay—half the distance; for such subsidy would have withered competition, and gone far to enable a merciless stranglehold to be exerted on the unfortunate Indian official classes.

As for parsimony—and parsnips—consider the following "gup," or idle tale:

Two young subalterns who had duly earned very considerable extra duty, or "in-addition" pay, found their claims disputed by the regional representative of the Pay Department; presumably, so said they in their bitterness—since their demand was all in order and covered by regulation—because he was saving up to go home on leave! Well, the case was nobly fought by their C.O., and, after more than the usual tossing back and forth in the welter of white bábúism, finally and actually reached the top of one of the tallest deodars on Olympus. Now, at last, "Heaven's Light Our Guide" and all that sort of thing, a tardy justice was sure!

Was it?

Back through the stately official channel spake the generous oracle: . . . that the claims of these young officers were upheld by the regulations; but that, owing to the time that had elapsed since their original submission, payment could not

be made retrospective, and that the case would now be considered as definitely closed.

When one has rather exceeded the glamorous age it is not easy again to conjure up memories of a quality so largely dependent on novelty for its power to interest and entertain. There are some people who, unfortunately for themselves, find no glamour in the East. There are others, visitors or travellers, who, in one way or another, have formed impressions that attract them temporarily to go and see for themselves, and who may or may not be disillusioned with the realities. There are also many in India who feel the call; but have served a lifetime without seeing more of it than that corner in which their lines happen to have been cast.

Yet there are few old "Anglo-Indians" who can deny that for them the glamour was once there. If the reasons for one's choice of Indian service did not include prospective interest in the country, that interest was bound to come in a land so diverse in itself, in its relics of a great past, and its extraordinary variety of scene, climate, and peoples—even if induced through nothing but the need of orientating oneself in unfamiliar surroundings and learning one's work.

When one happens to be of the third successive generation to choose an Indian career there must be more than ordinary interest in the country, and the receptivity to its glamour is likely to be strong. Thus I need hardly confess that for many years, consciously or unconsciously, my surroundings proved very attractive.

I read all that I could lay hands on of the history, religions, habits, and customs of the land, but—and I may have been unfortunate—very seldom did I come across any native who could talk with me really informatively on the first two subjects mentioned. Professionally, of course, I did not come into contact with the really learned classes—on whom the militant castes still look down—yet, when I happened to meet one of them, it was astonishing to find how localised or circumscribed his knowledge seemed to be. Practically all the

books obtainable on such subjects seem to have been written by white men !

That was not calculated to raise one's opinion of the heirs and successors of the ancient culture and creeds of Hindustan. And my feelings received another setback when a highly-educated orthodox Moslem gentleman informed me that few Indian Muhammadans really knew how to say their prayers.

Of the " failed B.A. " type of *psittacus indicus* I need say little. Although in a kind of English he may quote by the yard what he and his kindred imagine to be the best European philosophers, his erudition belongs definitely to the parrot-house.

A deadly disillusionment resulted from my conclusion that there was little indigenous education, or more than a minimum of " Indians " capable of telling me intelligently about themselves and their country.

There is a considerable amount of ordinary general knowledge concerning the religions, customs, and habits of one's men that forms part of the early training of young officers of the Indian Army, and that was picked up by observation, inquisitiveness, or imparted by their seniors, as handbooks were not very plentiful or informative. One's *múnshi*, or coach who prepared one for the language tests, as also the textbooks, provided information—of a sort. This was remedied later, and Army Headquarters, India, provided a number of good handbooks. One of the best concise general introductions to India is the *Military Handbook of General Information on India*, compiled in the Intelligence Branch ; and another useful and similar manual is *Notes for Officers Proceeding to India*, by the R.E. Institute, Chatham. But precept can be of little value unless there is interest and eyes and ears are open to daily opportunity.

At first one seems to be continually under the unobtrusive observation of native servants. The reason is that, by all the canons of efficient *khidmatgári*, or service, master's comfort should be anticipated as far as possible ; and that entails watchfulness : besides which, a good servant is genuinely

interested in his sahib. The novelty of a row of grave, silent, watchful, white-clad figures, one behind each dining member of the mess or club, soon wears off, and one almost ceases to notice that they are there, far less bothers whether they may or may not understand every word that falls !

And similarly one glides into acceptance and subconscious memorising of all the oddities, thus gradually absorbing what has to be learned. Even action becomes instinctive, almost reflex, for instance with regard to noxious things such as snakes, scorpions, etc. ; unless well defended by leather a light is never forgotten after dark, even in the house ; an odd bit of rope in the shadow, a suspicious sound, even, has instant effect, and one would not dream of putting the hand into a dark corner, cupboard, or bookshelf.

The eye becomes more observant—can tell the Mussulmán from the Hindu, and the different kinds of these, at a glance ; can often distinguish a native's calling or trade, recognise his particular caste, his dialect, his style of clothing, from what part of the country he comes ; thus avoiding mistakes that might cause offence or display ignorance. As experience accumulates one is even able to follow some of the working of the native mind, its motives, its probable reactions. Yet, surprises are sprung on even the most knowledgeable and sophisticated.

Running like a broken thread through one's mutual relations is the unfortunate fact of racial repugnance. This is latent rather than manifest, for the Eastern is to strangers politely reserved, and seldom vulgar. With him, however, familiarity very quickly breeds contempt. Consequently he is most impressed by a grave and distant formality of manner. Hobnob with him—and be instantly despised. This is the key to the troubles that arise when brown men visit the white man's countries and meet the " masses " there.

Then, many of our habits and characteristics are acutely offensive to the Indian mind : as his to us.

We dislike (*inter alia*) his deliberation, apathy, servility *cum* arrogance, shrinking from responsibility and lack of

moral courage, abiding untruthfulness, genius for the line of least resistance and for intrigue that would rather make two annas on the sly than a rupee on the square, procrastination, fatalism, inelastic custom, or *dastúr*, views as to womankind in general, callousness towards helpless animals and humans, and his frightful insanitation—in fact, his extraordinary passivity of outlook and behaviour ; while some of his habits —trifles in themselves—loom almost larger in our disfavour, such as his failure to see the fitness of things and his fatal choice of the wrong moment, his carelessness in wearing soiled clothing however carefully he may wash himself, his peculiar " squatting," the unpleasant unguents he employs in his food and on his person, his hawkings, spittings and echoing eructations (the proper things to do when " dining out," a compliment to his host's " chef "), the blowings of the nose on clothing.

For a while he may rise to an occasion, but lacks continuous " drive " ; does things by fits and starts ; has no idea of the value of time ; needs constant supervision. And his caste restrictions stifle incentive, preventing him from rising, as our people are free to do if they can, from a place low in the social scale to one much higher.

He can produce just as many grounds of dislike for us. He hates our hustle, our restless and wearisome energy at moments most inconvenient to him, our incomprehensible quixoticisms such as objection to bribery, the abominable things we eat—including both beef and pork—our horrid habit of retaining the tooth-brush after use, of walking into the house wearing our outdoor shoes, of tubbing all over in the same water ; all of which, and much more, fill him with horror.

And yet—oh, land of anomalies !—his far-distant Aryan connection keeps alive an inward hankering after fairness of skin. Photograph him, and, should the effect of lighting make him appear fairer than the reality, his satisfaction is pathetic . . . even though so many of him still look at a picture upside-down. This urge of the fair skin, the remote Aryan blood, is

exemplified in the fact that oriental potentates, able to break away from orthodoxy with comparative impunity, so often marry foreign women fairer than themselves.

The *Arabian Nights'* mentality is ingrained in these orientals. Rather, far, slavery to a cruel and capricious despotism, with the off-chance of a miraculous rise to giddy heights of favouritism, power, and pelf—or to as sudden a death at the despot's whim—than the settled dullness of the *Pax Britannica*. Rather the settled scale of bribes in the oriental form of "judiciary" than the inconceivable, impersonal, laboured justice of the white man's courts.

And, with it all, extraordinary child-like faiths, with, as pertains to such children of nature, their synonym—powerful superstitions, convictions, now, in the twentieth century, that native children have to be immured alive in large buildings such as bridges, to ensure their stability, that vaccination is a governmental device for rendering Indians sterile, and plague antitoxins a subtle instrument of the British manifestation of the dread goddess Káli.

And the thoughts that here arise—can one escape their verity? Gone the romantic rule of the ancient kingdoms of Hindustán; gone the Great Moghals (foreigners all), with their revenues that ranged up to seventy millions sterling, whose lavish patronage and magnificent ideas attracted alike the sage, the artist, the cunning craftsman, and a host of foreign adventurers, fiery spirits eager to hack their way to loot, prestige, and power—as so splendidly historied in Compton's *European Adventurers of Hindustán*. And now it is this very *Pax* on which we so plume ourselves that has withered all the old spirit of adventure, that has taken its gorgeousness from the East (although some other alien *pax* would certainly have done the same, or worse); for gone are the periodical waves of conquest, the very necessary refreshment of Aryan life-blood from beyond the Hindu Kúsh, as also the pestilences, famines, wars, infanticide, and other natural checks on a monstrously weedy, prolific generation that is almost an abiogenesis.

Thus have we the India that we have made, . . . and, in vulgar parlance . . . some India!

Even at the time of which I write, 1904, it was beginning to be in sooth what it had never been before—"the white man's burden."

And mark this: we took the reins of temporal government from a confusion of climatically weakened hands and imposed, superimposed our laws, alien ideas, on the immemorial institutions of an ancient and incredibly conservative civilisation. The latter, the Hindu socio-religious conception, through the vision and grip of its Brahminical priesthood—probably the most effective oligarchy that the world has yet seen—remains, for the vast majority of India's multi-millions, unimpaired to this day. And the dual, diarchical effect of this superimposition, this anomaly that only the personal genius of our local administrators has succeeded in maintaining, is evident at every shift of the two utterly dissimilar planes.

For instance, our Indian land assessment is the lowest in the world. But is it the ryot who benefits? or our governmental coffers . . .? We protect the *bania* from the people, but not the people from the *bania*. The old-established method of dealing with super-greedy, super-rapacious *banias* we forbid; but for it we substitute—nothing. It is as if we considered this *Pax* of ours to be a universal panacea, an elixir complete for every purpose. It is inflexibly true that never can and never will the polyglot, polygenous, and poly-everything-else inhabitants of India unite or stand by themselves against the occasions of the outer world—against which they are increasingly, pathetically defenceless; but, for the small, very small proportion of first-class men among them we ought to have had the vision and the common decency to provide. We could offer them no Arabian Nights, as Akbar did; but we might have provided for Indian Days which would have produced, *under real education*, not unworthy prototypes of Akbar's lieutenants. That would have created what India now lacks—a large, responsible, solid, intelligent "middle-class," bound to us by ties of mutual interest, enlightened as to India's limita-

tions, and proof against this extraneous Eastern wile that has found in her so ready a seed-bed for perversion and " unrest."

All of which is no more than wisdom after the event !

It is when serving in the Indian Army that Indians come into closest contact with British—and with a greater proportion of them : yet the classes that satisfy military requirements are very few, and traditionally unscholarly. Moreover, although held together by many mutual bonds of comradeship and esteem, when work—and games—are over, East and West go their ways ; the native officers, N.C.O.'s and men to their own largely screened lives in the Lines, the British officers to their messes and bungalows, their homes from home.

And could it be otherwise ? The Indian officer—or non-military Indian of equivalent status—is welcome at the house of the British officer, where also he will be cordially received by the mem-sahib ; but the sahib may not visit the native on equal terms, for the latter's code is quite different. Yet, with his talent for minding his own business, the Englishman in the East has adopted and maintained a *modus vivendi* that has borne the test of some three centuries !

This line of cleavage, this chasm between East and West, accustomed to it though we be, cannot fail to induce regretful thought. Have we made a mistake in maintaining the aloofness that has been forced on us, in falling into line with the unparalleled narrowness of India's outlook, in going our ways and letting them go theirs, in following too literally the " complete religious toleration " of the Royal Proclamation of 1858—and neglecting our moral duty by a mass of human beings numerically equal to the population of all Europe ?

The purely mental pabulum hitherto provided by us has had but its inevitable effect ; but we have also been content to stand aside and watch evil seed being sown in our educational establishments, and the grafting of race-hatred on mere race variation.

The power of real Christianisation at once suggests itself, and will undoubtedly prevail in time, however long that may

be in coming. But no man with experience of non-Christian races can deny that, for them in particular, the mere form is harmful, and that it is the practical character-training that must provide the stepping-stones until, at very long last, there comes the real and spontaneous demand for the bridge.

The method of character-training adopted for young heirs to Indian States, and carried out by selected British officers to the great benefit of ruler and subjects, exemplifies the above idea ; and it is much more than a pity that something similar has not yet formed part of our general educational policy.

Any idea of governmental support of mission effort would, however, not only cut at the roots of sincere conviction, but, as in Lord Canning's time just before the Mutiny, would be construed as an attempt to proselytise—of which the disaffected would make great capital.

The Briton does not enter the Indian services for the good of his health or for any such hypocritical idea as "taking up the white man's burden." Just as his ancestors, round about 1600 A.D., were attracted to India by the material interests of trade, he is attracted by what at any rate used to be the amenities of a jolly good life, a fair wage, sport, society, and even luxuries, at a moderate outlay ; and, should he survive, a good pension. In my time the advantages still outweighed the drawbacks. But India could never be a home for the white man. He is ever a bird of passage, an alien. He has never mixed with the indigenes of his foreign possessions as has the Frenchman—or the Russian, who, indeed, is more Eastern than European, and mixes to such an extent that throughout Siberia and right across to Kamchatka there are few pure-blooded Asiatics left.

Domestically, the Englishman's eyes turn ever homewards. Long since derelict is the significant little house built in a corner of his compound. Home his children must go, at a tender age, for upbringing and education. He sees little of them thereafter, unless he has married very young or very

old. The ship that takes him home on retirement passes, metaphorically, that which takes them out. Then there is the insoluble problem . . . shall the wife stay in England, or the mother in India ? . . . *and that prohibitive passage-money !* Thus, as the Gorgeous East turns slowly into the Land of Regrets, the mind turns to our many other equally wide lands overseas, white man's countries, pondering whether, with its insatiable drain on good British brawn and brains, it might not have been better if India had never entered into our " scheme of things entire."

A characteristic disconcerting for those responsible for the physical efficiency of the native soldier, in the days when he fed himself (peace-time) was that of voluntary starvation in order to save money. Sikhs seemed to be particularly prone to this. In those days it was the Adjutant who trained the regimental recruits, and I remember, in enthusiasm for producing only " hefty " lads for the " swearing-in " ceremony when they were passed into the ranks, the unofficial organising of a recruits' mess, together with a herd of milch buffaloes. Besides effecting the desired result this went far to form habits of proper feeding that were proof against subsequent mortification of the military flesh.

As is natural in a country of many different creeds and " jarring sects," nothing rouses more excitement than clashes of religious feeling. Yet, such is the trust that we have inspired by impartiality and good-will that Indians who know us never impute malice to our accidental offence against their prejudices.

The killing or injury of his sacred cow arouses the blindest frenzy of the orthodox Hindu, and if what I am about to relate had been the unwitting act of a Muhammadan the result might have been catastrophic.

A number of us were walking up small game in open bush country with a long line of our men, and I had just dropped a bird, when there was a rush, and a small herd of grazing

cows, hemmed in and terrified by the beat, tore, tails up, through the line. One of them charged me furiously with loud snorts, and, just before its horns arrived at the pit of my stomach, my gun went off from the hip. As I leapt aside, the wretched animal hurtled past with a frightful wound in its nose.

Right and left of me, and within a few paces, were several sepoys and a *havaldár* (sergeant) . . . high-caste Hindus all!

For one hesitating moment we all held our breath, staggered at the dreadful, impious calamity, . . . then at the havaldar's peremptory "*Chalo!*" ("Come along!") and forward impulse of his hand, they all continued straight on, taking no further notice whatever.

There is no doubt that his climate is responsible for the Indian's psychology . . . indeed, the farther my experience extends the more convincing becomes the theory that climatic environment is the prime factor in the moulding of human races, whatever their origin may have been. Between India's climate and the psychomachy of her inhabitants there is a subtle analogy, materialising, if you like, in "cause and effect"; similar periods of slumbrous brooding and recuperation following on hectic outbursts of passion. This, with the generally "hair-trigger" temperament, undoubtedly splenetic and the result of liver-derangement, both organs being adversely affected in the tropics, are responsible for the sudden furious quarrels, murderous assaults, and impulsive cruelties to children, to whom natives are, ordinarily, devoted.

The recuperative calm that succeeds these various brain-storms, not omitting the soporific influence of the heat, has an evident connection with Eastern "meditation," "soul-withdrawal," the "peace of the brooding ego," and all the other day-dreamings that, as the western sceptic knows, undergo a magical transformation on the application of a little healthy, external, physical stimulus.

Spleen and liver are also powerfully affected by the hot condiments that are generally necessary to stimulate the

digestive organs of Indians, and deal with the quantities of not-easily-digestible cereals that form their staple food; and the consequent pressure on those highly-stressed organs leads periodically to the explosive blowings-off of mental steam.

Thus, one should not too harshly condemn these unfortunate victims of a debilitating tropical cycle, remembering the conditions under which the bulk of Indian men—and women—have laboured and bred for thousands of their brief generations.

Such environment, human and climatic, cannot fail to affect the white man, in degree according to his temperament. Either he gives too much rein to his temper—which is subject to considerable trial in the East—and his health, comfort, and character suffer accordingly, or else the continual object-lessons drive him in the opposite direction, and he erects artificial barriers against predisposing causes. This seems the more likely to happen if he has a sharp temper of his own: the frequent mirroring, in natives, of his own foible, may cause him to cultivate too tranquil a demeanour, too general an avoidance of causes of friction—which are bound to lead to some awkward misunderstandings in a world that is still largely simian.

Opium is consumed by Indians to a far larger extent than is generally known; which is not to be wondered at under the circumstances. It is a sort of universal stand-by, like the family medicine-cupboard of one's youth.

A minute quantity sucked from mother's finger by a fractious brown baby—and *arám*, or peace, is ensured. A tiny pellet under the tongue—and sepoy Afím Khan, or Singh—quite unaffected by the intense excitement of a great moment—calmly puts on his *n*th successive bull's-eye and wins the Presidency Cup. A larger pill—and the condemned criminal mounts the scaffold " with stoical sangfroid." A continuance of the insidious pills—and cretinism *cum* Saint Vitus's Dance.

It must not be imagined, from a few humorous allusions

that the cruel European makes a hobby of beating a poor native or two every morning as an appetiser for chota hazri. The vast majority of Britons never raise the hand of wrath against their Aryan brother; not on account of their transcendent nobility of nature, but because it is a wretched thing to do, cowardly as a rule, and unsatisfactory in every way. With the native it is different. He is quick to use the big stick; and, provided that there are no witnesses to his loss of "face"—or else no "face" to lose—just as quick to accept its arbitrament. In a "letter" I received from the mother of a young and inefficient servant whom I proposed to dismiss, ran the characteristic sentence:

"... beat him every day teach him and beat him well so will he coforting poor affectionate mama."

All of which reminds me of the Bélkhéra incident.

I had not long since risen from my one and only serious bed of sickness. The doctors called it "enteritis" (pre-appendicitis days), but, judging from my subsequent immunity from below-the-belt worries, and my feelings at the time, in spite of lots of morphia, I must have made a natural get-away from my vermiform appendix.

While still in the invalid stage I received news of a promising panther-kill at the foot of the Ellichpur hills; and managed to sneak off—grass-bachelorhood!—unseen by the medical officer or anybody else.

On reaching Belkhera I found that a *tanta*, or Indian quarrel, had taken place. Poor old Lallu, whom I had sent out to "bundobust karo," had fallen foul of a lusty young *gaoli*, or cowherd, over some little matter of a goat—and had taken a brutal beating; while it was reported to me that his assailant had delivered himself of some most unparliamentary expressions in reference to myself!

That was my first—and last—experience of such a thing; and I was not pleased. Sending for the gaoli, he came forward truculently, a burly-looking varlet, and, to my amazement, did not deny my soft impeachment; then, as I sprang angrily from my seat under a large tamarind-tree, surprised

me still more by advancing in the tentative attitude of the *pahlwán*, or native wrestler!

Now, though off the sick-list, I was as weak as a rat—ought to have been lying obediently on a couch in my verandah, sucking barley-water—and I did not doubt that he would get the better of me, once it came to grips. Maddened at the thought, and visualising the undignified sequels in which I might subsequently be involved, I instantly went "bear-shirt" and was at once all over the fellow. Fortunately, after the first smack, I had the sense to open my hands and use the palms only. And in less than no time I was sitting on his head and shouting to my delighted old Korku—who, with a knot of his friends was exhibiting the aboriginal's inveterate risibility—for a branch off the tamarind, of which the boughs, by the way, droop to within cattle-munch of the ground and are so extraordinarily tough that one may swing by them, or swarm up. A painful but not dangerous cut or two with the magic wand, on the spot that would best be remembered, convinced my late pahlwan of the fitness of things in general, and we then parted very swiftly—after he had expressed himself as entirely satisfied.

Next day, what was my surprise to meet the local civil administrator—a charming fellow, wearing a worried look and slowly stroking the back of his head in a way he had when perplexed—and to be informed that I had placed him in a serious, oh, a very serious position. It appeared that a tahsildar, or other sort of native *dár*, hearing of the Belkhera affair, had routed out a most unwilling gaoli, faked him up with stamp-paper into a hideously-wounded case, and, sending him in to the cantonment hospital—*our* hospital!—made his official report.

And indeed my friend's worry was genuine; for it was well known that, owing to a bad attack of "poor black man" in certain quarters at the time, it would go hard with any "cruel European" in the position in which I had been placed. Yet . . . a little pondering seemed to make my way clear. Comforting my friend as best I could, and telling him to put away

his concern together with a cooling and carminative drink that just then miraculously appeared, I departed, thoughtful, to my task.

As a matter of fact, the trumps were all in my hand ; for the native underling was the very one that I had seen cuffed soundly down the steps of a bungalow, not very far away, for some dereliction of duty, by the chief civilian of the region—at which unexpected entertainment I had been quite unable to dissemble my mirth. And *this* worm it was, who, not dreaming of complaint against his own powerfully placed superior, had cooked up the gaoli case, judging that it could safely be worked on a mere paltan-wallah sahib.

But there was a way infinitely simpler : and much more discreet.

A commanding figure in spotless and voluminous white, whose spiritual home was the North-West Frontier—which, by the way, he, Muhammad Ali Khan, had only left because all his male relatives had died of lead-poisoning—paid me two unofficial visits within the next hour. From the first, during which he waved his hand deprecatingly and then laid it lightly on his bosom with a slight inclination of the head, he departed with the firm, quick tread of a man in whom righteous wrath and haste to fit punishment to crime struggle for the mastery. To the second he came in suave, yet cynical mood—and made a monosyllabic report accompanied by just one contemptuous flick of the fingers.

And that evening, as I mingled conjecture with whisky and soda in company with a brother officer whose duties had taken him to the hospital at a certain hour, a picture gradually began to take shape . . . a tall figure that had stepped from the main entrance, reflectively twiddling something, some rifle, in its fingers . . . a furtive form that had stolen swiftly from the far end of the same building, leaving a light trail of dust that led directly towards the hills . . . when, if memory does not play me false, suddenly smacking his knee, my companion leant towards me with a grin, beating time with an appreciative forefinger and whistling the refrain of a dainty

little song then being sung and danced in London by a very dainty little actress:

> " Just a lit-tle bit of string—
> Quite a simple lit-tle thing,
> Not so tightly tied as string should be ! "

Jungle wanderings soon demonstrate the amusing ineffectiveness of civilised man when thrown on his own resources in primitive surroundings. The conditions and problems that supply so much of the interest of a " desert island " story always emphasise the advantages of acquaintance with the shifts and expedients of the strictly simple life, but are seldom used in the negative way that is true to nature; the hero is far too expert in all that is modern and ancient—especially ancient.

In reality, accustomed to the regular conveniences of science made available by his network of specialised organisations and divisions of labour, modern man is helpless or exceedingly uncomfortable in situations to which his native assistants adapt themselves with ease. It is a little disconcerting for such a lord of creation to sit and watch the doing of simple things that are now quite beyond his powers—a lost art: the producing of fire without matches, the getting of a blaze in spite of rain and wind, the preparation of food from the raw material with the simplest of means, the knowledge and facility that make the forest yield even of its more obvious vegetable, animal, and mineral store, its food, shelter and building material, rope, string, torch, poison, antidote, and the many other essentials of even primitive life. And although these people are only in a stage of development that civilisation has long since forgotten, they demonstrate his artificiality; and the simultaneous presentation of the ancient and the modern drive home his dependence and his vast debt as the heir of the ages of effort, of muscle and brain, that have given him his all.

He can note the plain, rough fare of these " artless " people, on which they can undergo physical effort at least equal to

his; and may make significant comparison between it and the generosity and luxury of his own dietary.

Belonging to a section of humanity that has stood still for thousands of years, the primitive man, for his part, is perplexed and confused by the intricate appliances of civilisation—of which only a few of the simplest forms ever reach him—such as a rude iron implement or two, fashioned by some nearly as primitive village smith. Of the efficacy of the white man's inventions he has ocular proof, but they seldom excite his envy; they are beyond him, he says; he is a poor man and could not be bothered with them and their troublesome care and upkeep, for which, with his continual and mostly individual business of satisfying his hunger and his few other simple wants, he has no time. There are, perhaps, a few of the commoner things, such as empty bottles and paraffin-oil tins that may be of temporary use; but they are not nearly so durable as coco-nut shells and dried gourds.

In one way only is he appreciative and suppliant of the white man and his science; and in that his faith is stupendous and touching . . . one and all, he invests us with god-like powers of medicine that have potency to banish each and every bodily ill.

In summarizing these ponderings under the punkah, in roughing in the broad outlines of the complicated Indian picture, I must again remind the critical reader that while I refer at times to one or other of the many very different kinds of "Indian"—the aboriginal, the trader, the clerical class, the agriculturist, the fighting classes, and so on, these are for the most part generalisations, averages, based on the limited experience of a soldier-officer's earlier years; and that the characteristics of those Easterns with whom I had until then come into contact are not being compared, *pari passu*, with those of a European proletariat. The point of view is the rather Olympian one of our middle-class British officer, civil or military, who, until after he has finished with India, and retired, has small knowledge of the "masses" of his own

race—(or what passes for that in some parts of our too hospitable country)—to whom, indeed, distance has lent no little enchantment.

At the same time, no academic setting-off of the respective good and bad points of either race, nor the excellence of individual Easterns here and there, can obscure the outstanding fact that in the correlative, positive qualities which rule interracial relation and go to decide the final and basic arbitrament of force, the white man is supreme, with a supremacy that must inevitably increase with each successive scientific advance. His average, his inherent possibilities, are very much higher.

Against this supremacy—which, obviously, is the white man's shield against being out-bred (out-numbered) or economically outbid by races with a lower and slower standard of life—all the traditional negative subtlety of the East—and of the East in the West—with its subterfuges, evasions, perversions, vocality, and money-craft is powerless to prevail.

This, then, is the master-key to our relations with the vast bulk of Indians. Accept the basic truth—as in his heart the average Indian always will—and friction between white man and brown can be avoided, or lubricated out. Stage the farce, the ridiculous make-believe of a general equality—and our toleration and good-will are too heavily stressed; with the inevitable repercussions.

Under the conditions at the time of which I write, Briton and Indian were able to live side by side on terms of reasonable comprehension and of good-will, even of affection, slowly and unconsciously educating each other in spite of errors of statesmanship past and present. Although in sheer clumsiness, or perhaps for lack of sufficient space, I may here seem to have piled up all the nasty things I can say of the native, that was not apparent in actual life. We had reached a mutual understanding, and, apparently on each side, were content to make the best of each other, often finding that preconceived ideas were wrong; while, in the much closer

bonds of the Indian Army, the British officer found his happiness in that of his men, with whom indeed he identified himself, ever solicitous for their welfare, and quick as any Muhammadan or Hindu to resent injury of their interests or infringement of their various religious prejudices or customs.

And so to our little epilogue. Just as the bursting of the south-west monsoon washes away the dust and irritation of the hot weather, let Lethe bear away all but kind thoughts of our brown fellow-subjects. Let us remember his many good points; appreciate his many individuals that in their fine qualities provide the exceptions that prove our rule; blame not him, but his climate.

And even—in this part of the country—does that climate now relent. Let the ponies be brought round, so that we may canter away over the general parade-ground, past the artillery lines, over the battery nullah, on to the great brown plains, for a good gallop across them in the evening light, marvelling at Nature's significant change, her local equivalent of spring. Instead of the dry and burning wind of the past three months from a point north of west, a soft, south-west breeze meets our faces and actually seems to carry a breath of moisture. The skin of one's hands, between the fingers especially, is less harsh, saddles seem less glassy. Most trees have pushed out expectant masses of fresh, bright leafage. The sky has lost its brass. And far to the southward lies a great pall of cloud that ever seems to mount a little higher.

A curious presage lies over the immensity of the land; a sense of waiting on something long delayed. And, by an old threshing-floor stands a humble *Kúnbi*, tiller of the soil, his attitude reflecting the general expectancy.

"*Rám, Rám! Sahib, salám!*" And we draw rein, to discuss the monsoon prospects. We impart the information that yesterday the rains had fully broken on the Bombay coast. A head-wag, and the reply that the *barsát* will be here to-night. How does he know? "On this wise, sahib"—and an old stalk of straw is picked up at random "See! It bends completely round. Two days ago it would have

cracked. Yesterday it began to bend. To-night? Ah to-night!"—and he indicates that to-night it will be soaked, beaten into the mud, washed off and away down some racing nullah.

And he is right. In the night a sudden, great, gusty slamming of doors and windows; a shout; hastening hurricane lanterns; and servants hurriedly barring and bolting. Then a roaring wind, bearing that extraordinarily fragrant scent of parched earth suddenly rain-soaked, followed by all the great guns and flashings of the *pakka barsát*. A spray that drives through the streaming verandah; a groaning of the tall bamboo-clumps that border the Mall; and finally, with a big drop in temperature, the ceaseless, solid rods of drumming water, water, water.

The unwanted punkah has stopped. No more the "paddle-paddle" of the thermantidote. And, to-morrow's morn, with any luck, instead of that anathematised "dress for parade," we shall roll over for another glorious, cool beauty-sleep, to a welcome, watery bugling:

"There's no parade to-day!
There's no parade to-day!
The Adjutant's got the (toothache?) and the Colonel's gone away!"

VIII

IN BISON LAND

"BISON Land" is situated as nearly as possible between Longitude 66° and 100° East, Latitude 8° and 30° North. To reach it you go by the M.U.M. Railway to Málumnépúr, thence road to Gapchupabad; whence you must flat-foot it up the Poshída Pass. And, by Jove, when you do get there, you can lick your lips to slow, soft music! Personally, I hate the dog-in-the-manger policy that many men pursue in keeping good places dark—and often, in reading shikar articles, I have been much struck with the caution so selfishly taken by writers to conceal all those little traces by which their favourite places may be ferreted out by keen readers accustomed to tracking. So there is Bison Land! And my shikaris have been sworn on Koran and cow's tail to help any sahibs that may inquire of them the best places, and my favourite spots.

As my tale proceeds it will be realised that Bison Land is —Bison Land. Counting up the number of bison seen day by day, the total is close on 130 for the two months I spent there. I also saw quantities of sambar, most of the stags of course being in velvet at that time—May and June—heads I should say fairly good only, judging from the shed horns which I saw being packed out of the country by traders, but massive, and with very long brow-tines. Tigers and panthers are few, a maneater or two being reputed to haunt a certain long valley. Bears do exist; but we did not make the extraordinary efforts that are apparently necessary to bring them to bag in such a sea of jungle as covers the country. Spotted deer are quite plentiful in parts—carry rather good heads. Numbers of *jungli bakris*, of both kinds, infest the

forests and hills. But the bison are the great feature. Indeed the whole country positively swarms with them.

Now as to the rifle.

With the exception of a few four-horned antelope, one or two shots at spotted deer, and another at a panther's head, it bagged practically every beast fired at. Being quite an ordinary, indeed an indifferent shot, I let no false modesty stand in my way in making such an egotistical assertion. It was the rifle that did it. Light, handy, beautifully balanced, a slight recoil, and always the same length of trigger—with a perfect "pull off"—its use became second nature.

A temporary tightness of the money market made it impossible to complete my battery with one of the D.-B. H.-V. cordite rifles which I had used for some years—but had sold in anticipation of no more shikar for a long time. So when the unexpected chance of a holiday occurred, I cast about for a cheaper but reliable weapon to supplement the ball-and-shot gun which alone remained to me of my old friends. A single barrel was of course out of the question. Besides this, I had for nearly a decade past, been an upholder of the magazine rifle—could it only be built to take a cartridge powerful enough for big game. Time has proved these prognostications to be correct, in that magazine rifles are at last to be had powerful enough for the biggest game, and a little more time is going to prove the contention that even for old shikaris they are superior to the D.-B. form of weapon.

I speak of the use of the magazine rifle—not of its abuse.

Now, it so happened that my holiday fell at a time when I had just heard of a magazine rifle taking a cartridge practically the same as the good old ·400 cordite—and a weapon I had been begging gun-makers to build for me for some eight years. But it was impossible to procure one of these in time, so, after thinking the question out, and going over one or two other magazine rifles taking fairly powerful H.V. ammunition, I pitched on a new ·350, which, on paper, had the best ballistics of the lot. These rifles were to be had in India—

and I ordered one. Its appearance, turn out, and handling were delightful, its weight about 7½ lbs., and it was of a very neat "take down" pattern. It remained to try it.

In my search after larger bore magazine rifles I had had an unfortunate accident some years before, when the weapon burst, and the bolt blew out, missing my head by some miracle—a very narrow squeak. So I repaired to my range, ·350 in hand, with an extempore "rest" and a length of string.

It was a hot day, quite as hot as I should experience in any jungle; but I had applied an additional test by placing several cartridges for some days in the sun. It was certainly unfortunate that in arranging the "rest" I should have put my finger on the only scorpion in the neighbourhood—who of course lost no time in touching the spot—but the trial proceeded, and the heated cartridges were fired by means of a long string pulled from behind the cover of a mound of earth. All being perfectly satisfactory, I took up the rifle, and fired a few shots off the shoulder, with considerable accuracy; after which I went home—to think awhile rather more of scorpions than of rifles—until a knowledgeable friend and a tumblerful of neat "Scotch" floated me into bed and a pleasurable *nirvána*. Thus the genesis of my ·350.

The journey to our hunting ground via the localities already quoted was one of great interest, and led through a country perfectly new to me, a land of strange beauty. From the Poshída Pass one travels for a day up the deep valley of the Bilkul Khámósh River, branching off finally next day for a six-mile climb to the Khamosh Plateau. This was our first ground for bison.

Our quarters were handy—in a sort of cave, which, as the few other sportsmen who know this place will remember, lies just below the edge of the plateau itself, a spot of considerable natural beauty; and our water, high up as we were, was obtained from a most delightful fern-smothered little rill of the coldest and clearest spring water imaginable, rendering any filtering or boiling unnecessary. Our first task was to render the cave and its surroundings as luxurious as possible,

and remarkably comfortable they became. Tea over, in the late afternoon, we strolled forth with rosy anticipations to survey our bison ground.

The Khamosh Plateau is roughly about ten miles in length —a lofty, somewhat barren, rocky-topped ridge, more undulating than flat or level on top, and rising from the lesser sea of hills around.

About three miles from our cave it ends abruptly, throwing down two great scowling bluffs that fall, like the steep stoop of a hawk, to the blue-green waters of the narrowed river, two thousand feet below, where 100-lb. mahsir are reputed to have their home.

To either side of the main ridge fall bamboo and tree-jungled slopes, the various gullies of which, uniting some 500 to 700 feet lower down, become beautiful perennial streams, canopied over and hidden by enormous mango-trees, and fringed by a dense carpeting of ferns. Not being a botanist, I can only say that, when I visited these fairy spots, my great rude feet crushed unavoidably through a luxuriant mass of most expensive-looking hot-house fernery, mingled with maidenhair and set off by clumps of exquisite tree-ferns. Those dells, where butterflies danced in many flights of variegated colour, and a myriad huge mosquitoes maintained an incessant pinging, occurred all along the hill, on both sides, whenever the uniting gullies supplied moisture; and provided almost inviolable sanctuary for wild animals.

The best time for shooting here is when the grass sprouts after the early "mango showers" and the bison keep more to the plateau. But during our visit they came up only at night, or in the very early morning, and soon after sunrise descended the hill-sides to shadier spots.

There was only a little green grass, which had sprung up after the forest fires, which in this glorious wild country are allowed their full and natural scope. No short-sighted interfering with Nature here! No foreign and blind application of a theoretical forestry "made in Germany"! So the succulent young grass springs from the enriched and unen-

cumbered earth—and bison can live, wax fat, and kick and snort in comfort.

As we climbed the little rocky ascent and gazed forth on the promised land, a heavy thunderstorm was raging away beyond the river; and it came up so fast as to prevent our indulging in more than a mere stroll and look round. Four-horned antelope darted away here and there, bison tracks fresh and old literally covered the ground, beautifully cool bamboo thickets led away from every side down the slopes A gorgeous view unfolded itself, the jungly hills rolling away in their procession of woody folds, green, and blue, and purple, to the hazy horizon. Unspoiled, wild, seldom troubled by human foot, there they lay—"as in the beginning." But the storm is flying up. The red jungle-cocks have ceased their crowing. A flash, and a rumble from the gathering clouds overhead, and the big drops begin to fall. It is time for the cave-dwellers to seek their rude home for the night.

Next morning we were astir betimes. The spin of a coin decided our respective directions. As I gained the plateau and bore away westwards, a thick and driving fog from the neighbouring Bay of Bengal—a feature of those strange solitudes which persists from about 5 a.m. till well past sunrise—was billowing past in fantastic curls of vapour. The hill-top was very stony, and in places composed of sheet rock. Some harsh grasses, unconsumed by the forest fires, still prevailed in parts, and numbers of the dwarf date palm—*Phœnix sylvestris*, I believe—dotted the earthier stretches.

Throwing out my two jungle men—I cannot call them shikaris—right and left, one on each brow of the hill, I kept to the centre of the ridge, here narrow enough. Proceeding in this way for about a mile, during which I marvelled at the numbers of bison and sambur tracks, while *jungly bakris* bounced away in front of me at short intervals, I perceived one of my fellows rapidly approaching.

"Bison Bull," whispered he! By means of a slight smattering of the jungle man's language, which I had just begun to study, I at length gather that the bull is in a large patch of

bamboos and trees directly to my right—and note that the wind is blowing straight from me to him! A rapid detour alters this, and in hope and fear I take my henchman well round out of the wind, and request him to indicate the approximate position of the animal.

We creep gently forward, until a dusky finger goes out.

Ah!—Eh?—Nothing is visible—even with the binoculars. We go ahead again slowly. Again the finger is raised. No, nothing to be seen! But stay! and the glasses are raised.

Well! there is a black rock just visible through the bamboos, a rock with stuff like moss on it—a strange sort of rounded rock. I creep forward some yards—and wait for a long time. Suddenly an object like a large leaf stirs on the rock. It is rather like an ear! A bamboo twig cracks. The leaf moves slowly again; there is a queer movement on one end of the rock—something seems to be chewing slowly! Then, all of a sudden, although there is no other movement, the outline of part of a bison is distinctly visible! And it had been there all the time! Fifty, forty yards away, a big black bison is enjoying a hearty breakfast of bamboo leaves.

The movements are all slow, gentle, gradual. They might be anything but those of a live creature—there is nothing to catch the eye—yet there the great beast stands in the most perfect silence, and at intervals a huge muzzle is raised, a greyish prehensile tongue goes out, curls round the juiciest bamboo leaves, and gathers them in methodically to the steadily chewing mouth. Hitherto all had been as a dream, only a phantom animal had stood there—but now a pace forward and a turn of the black bulk causes a stick to crack, and a bamboo creaks and whips back sharply.

Some fifteen yards ahead is a largish tree, forking near the ground. Dried leaves litter the ground. Step by step—toe by toe, I diminish the distance, and at length crouch behind that low fork. The bison is now about twenty-five yards away, but in a most impossible position, hopelessly covered by bamboos. But the wind is beautifully right and I can wait.

Being sceptical as to the power of the new rifle which I eld in my hand, I had made up my mind that I would take one but picked shots at bison, using the quite solid nickel-overed bullet, and shooting carefully so as to break the large ones about neck and shoulder—so there I crouched with a solid " in the rifle, and more in the magazine. What else rompted me then I cannot remember, but, since there seemed ery little chance of my " picked shot " in this dense covert, opened the bolt slowly, and, extracting the cartridge, replaced by one loaded with a solid, soft-nosed bullet—the soft nose eing exposed for a very short way.

Still waiting patiently there behind my tree, I found that ny wristlet watch had stopped. I wound it up—judged the ime from the sun now just well over the low trees, and reset he hands. The bison had meanwhile slightly altered its posi-ion, and for the first time displayed a kind of disquietude—stopped feeding, and seemed to be listening and sniffing the ir. My binoculars had been on it all this time, and the ques-ion to be settled, in spite of it being solitary, was whether it as a bull ; and, if so, whether it was a shootable one. Before ng I could see that he was a bull all right, but no amount f staring with the glasses would quite settle the other ques-on. Bison's horns are deceptive, especially those of soli-ary bulls, unless clearly visible ; for there is nothing to ompare them with. A small-built bull exaggerates his horns nsiderably, and vice versa.

After I had waited a quarter of an hour behind that forked ee, I could see that my only chance lay in an approach from different direction. So, waiting my opportunity, I very adually edged across a rather open spot, and got behind a amboo clump. Ten yards or so to my left front, another ump seemed to afford a better view of the bull—and thither stole, inch by inch. A crash in the bamboos set my heart my mouth—he was off? But no! The great brute had ut pushed aside a mass of thorny canes, and these so hid s looming shape that I almost despaired of obtaining a ear view.

But fate willed it otherwise. After several minutes the bison turned gradually, and very slowly retraced his steps. A shaft of sunlight struck on one of his horns, throwing up deep corrugations at its base! By bending down low, just one small hole showed through hundreds of little branches, and through that minute tunnel the deadly missile must pass to its mark. And, as luck would have it, an instant later it gave access to exactly the right spot on the bison's great black shoulder.

I was fully prepared to put in several rapid shots, and then commit myself to the lengthy tracking and following up of a wounded beast, so, with these thoughts in my mind, my surprise may be imagined at what actually happened. With the slight ringing report of the little ·350 this great beast fell like a log! Finger on trigger, I watched him in astonishment. There he lay, kicking out a leg at convulsive intervals—absolutely floored with a single shot! Presently I crept round, and, getting behind him as he lay, fired at the back of his head. The first shot went too high, merely perforating the misleading high frontal ridge of his head; but another found his brain; and he slept with his fathers, his great head resting in a pile of grey ash—the remains of a burned tree. A fine bull, but not a patriarch; with a passably good head.

Though pleasantly surprised by the effect of the new rifle I must confess that I considered this bowling over of the first bison to be an absolute fluke. The bullet had struck a little behind the top of the shoulder, in prolongation of the foreleg, penetrating to the skin on the opposite side.

In the evening, going out for a quiet prowl, I saw nothing but *jungli bakris*. The first bullet fired at the bison this morning was cut out and brought to me—most perfectly "set up."

Next day I suffered grievous disappointment—which was brought about by one of the numerous four-horned antelope that haunted the plateau—and missed a snapshot at a fine bull, as he burst, tail in air, from some long grass in a slight hollow, and vanished over a steep *khad*. Subsequent tracking

asted until noon, without effect. A bear was heard giving ongue, up a side ravine. I visited *en route* one of the fern lades in a deep valley; then home to the cave. In the even- ng I trudged a six-mile round to get an idea of the country to he north, seeing numberless tracks, but no game.

Hard work next day resulted in seeing two large heads of ison; but no shootable bull.

On the following morning an early start found me crossing he plateau through the usual morning fog—making for an solated flat-topped hill which I had previously marked. The oaking damp of the morning atmosphere, followed by hot sun which licked up the early mist, caused excessive erspiration; and I soon found that the usual thin riding reeches, a form of nether garment which I had worn in the ungle for sixteen years, became unbearably water-logged at he knee. The climate was one in which I had not shot efore. I had previously given a trial to ordinary khaki-drill ootball "shorts," but had found them unsuitable in the saddle.

However, we live and learn every day, and in Bison Land did not ride. I sat down in a huff, and, with the shikar nife, hacked off my breeches just above the knee, discarded he lower portion, and retied my putties on the bare leg. he result was extraordinarily successful—and during the hole of that shoot I wore nothing else—converting my ther part-worn breeches in a similar manner. Let him who as never tried this give it a test. Moderately close-fitting ist above the knee, and keeping out grass and dust, yet airy nd cool, while possessing the comfortable roominess of riding reeches round the thigh, this form of clothing for one's ether limbs is difficult to beat for work in hot damp weather. he exposed knees, being fairly tough, ought not to skin under he sun. Mine never did. But it might be different when he sun is hot but the wind dry and cold.

After these sartorial alterations I set off again in quite a unty way; descended into a deep ravine, the vegetation of hich was tied up into an almost impenetrable tangle by ultitudinous ropes of rattan cane; and began climbing up

the other side towards the solitary hill-top where I was about to enjoy a splendid piece of fortune.

It was one of those mornings which are hotter just after dawn than later on when the breeze gets up, and I remember that stiff upward plodding through long dry grass, fallen bamboos, and rocks was rather trying, the fiery sun pouring down his piercing beams on my back. Wonderful it is how the white man gets through hundreds of such days! One looks back over one's shikar reminiscences, years of them, realising the number of times one has toiled and sweated through that terrible sun, with a feeling akin to disbelief. Yet surely it is worth it, not only at the time, but also, provided a strong constitution, for future bodily well-being, and the hungry looking individual who returns from his jungle jaunts, brown and wiry, has a better record, methinks, than the plump sleek creature just down from his annual "poodle-faking" in the "hills."

High above me rose the table-topped hill I had marked on a previous occasion as a likely place for a solitary old *gaur*—a diminutive plateau, standing apart amid the loftier hill-tops that rise inland from the Khamosh River, and, by reason of its solitude, meet resort of some misanthropic old bison. And to this spot I steadily climbed. Behind me, and below in the ferny depths of the ravine I had crossed, rose the staccato notes of the red jungle-cock, and from the tall trees bordering it came the weird chattering of the big maroon squirrel that make these jungles their home.

At last we approach the edge of the little plateau; the ground becomes less steep, but more thickly grown with undergrowth, while through the trees and bamboos can be seen the little edging of dark rock that rims the tableland about. The wind is blowing now—a relief after our hot climb—rather across our front. We halt and, pulling out a handkerchief, mop a streaming brow—when suddenly a loud snort and a heavy crash just ahead bring the little rifle instantly to the ready. A glimpse of a huge black back for the fraction of a second, the sharp report of a smashed bamboo—and silence

A HOT HILL-SIDE

SHADE

. . Full two minutes I had stood like a statue there ; finger
n trigger ; ready, and motionless. Behind me, at the dis-
ance of thirty yards or more that my henchmen are taught
o preserve, cowered the men. Not a sound, not a move
ame from the bamboos ahead. Had the bull gone ? Was
e still there ? What had happened ? Slowly, gradually,
oot by foot, I stole forward—and, to cut a long story short,
ound the bison's lair just ahead. The ploughed tracks had
cattered the dry brown leaf-mould a few yards ; then he had
ettled into a walk. He had then ascended the plateau itself,
nd nothing was now in sight.

A few minutes later I had reached and peered over the
evel top of the hill. It was a bare, smooth glade, only a few
aces wide, but long, running north-east and south-west.
couple of fine peacocks, oblivious of mundane affairs, were
ghting tooth and nail in the centre of this glade between
ne edging of trees, and a few terrified-looking monkeys,
lancing anxiously at me over their shoulders, were lobbing
way in the distance. Otherwise the place was deserted.

The faint traces of the bull's passage showed that he had
alted on the plateau, but, after that, all tracks seemed to
ease. His natural line, of course, was across the little ridge
nd down its far side, and I realised that if he had experienced
ne fright consequent on winding or sighting man he would
ow be far away, probably at the bottom of some great ravine,
journeying swiftly to some distant bourne. But had he
nown the disturber of his rest for a man ? Had he winded
e ? Seen me or the men he certainly had not, for we had
ozen into statues at once, and he had not run far. And the
rection of the wind had been perfectly safe. How was it
nat those peacocks were fighting there if the bull's retreat
ad been at all hurried ? It is little things of this kind that
ing consolation—and fortune—to the shikari, at times when
an's natural feelings prompt him to jump to a despairing
nclusion. It was therefore no foregone conclusion that the
son had left the immediate neighbourhood. Silence and
atience might therefore reap their reward.

Signalling up the men, we spread out quietly to pick up the tracks. My instructions were—not to leave the edge of the plateau, but first of all to discover the spot when the bull had left it for the slopes below.

Finding fresh tracks to my right, on some softish patches of soil, I was led by them right along the table-topped ridge. This was evidently a favourite spot of the bison during the rainy season—for some soft ground and a dried mud-wallow were literally puddled-up with thousands of hoof-marks of that time of year. Some quarter of a mile farther on I found myself at the north-east termination of the hill, without a sign of the beast we were after. The tracks I had taken up had vanished, and I had circumambulated the eastern verge of the plateau, examining the slopes below without success.

Below me, far away, and at a depth of more than two thousand feet, lay, outspread like a map, the valley of the great Khamosh. The mighty river itself, bordered at this season with huge expanses of dry yellow sand, wound and unwound like a shining light green serpent through the purple hills that rose to bar its progress; and its course could be traced into the haze of the horizon by patches of shimmering light right away over the vast plains through which it came. My plateau, with its thinner, scantier clothing of bamboo jungle, dropped suddenly to a maze of very thickly wooded hills that raised their jumble of steep peaks and knolls from both sides of a tributary stream below. This stream seemed to find a way to the Khamosh through a deep rent in the range. The country was, in fact, of an extremely wild and savage type, abounding in almost inaccessible sanctuaries smothered in thickest covert. Lucky for us it is that our old friend *gaur* seems to prefer the higher and more open hills, for in those haunts below he would be absolutely safe. The scene was one of those which enchant with their sense of absolute loneliness. Not even the most enterprising of bamboo-cutters ever penetrate here. Native shikaris are few. Human foot indeed has seldom trodden these retired ways.

As I indulged in these pleasant ruminations, prior to turning

and prowling round the unexplored western edge of the hill, I became aware of a distant figure hastening towards me, and beckoning violently; and instantly that delightful feeling of anticipation darted through my veins. What shikari is there that does not know and remember those delightful signals, pregnant with unknown joys—and the alacrity of one's response! Quickly approaching my breathless scout, I learned that the bull—or his tracks—had been found. In those, to me, absolutely new shooting grounds, I was at first at some disadvantage before a smattering of the language could be picked up. So it was not certain whether the bison himself, or merely the line of his retreat, had been discovered. Hastening back to the spot at which we had first emerged on the plateau, I found my own shikar orderly with the second of the jungle men, and from his agonised appearance of suppressed suspense as I approached him I gathered that the game itself had been found. It appears that one of the men had almost stepped on the bull lying down just beyond the far edge of the hill, but had withdrawn unseen and unnoticed.

And now it was apparent that instant action must be taken. The direction of the spot where the bull had been found lay immediately to leeward of our party, and a strong breeze blew in a straight line from us to him! Four human beings, all dispensing various *esprits de corps*, should have become instantly known to any bison! So, with a quiet opening and reclosing of my Mauser bolt, to confirm that all was ready—a cartridge in the chamber and five more in the magazine—two of the men were sent right away out of the wind, with the third I moved quickly but noiselessly forward. To my astonishment, we had not travelled more than fifty paces when my little black scout halted, raised a finger, and got rapidly away to the rear!—and there—in spite of my careful teaching, my reiterated injunctions to show the animal *from a distance*—lay a shapeless bulk of coal-black hue, half-hidden by a big clump of bamboos.

The breeze striking full on my back, passed directly on-

wards to the great brute, yet he continued to lie there, unconscious of my presence! Turned half away from me, with his great lower jaw placidly chewing the cud, reposed the mighty forest bull. A maze of stiff canes covered him most completely, and, although within a short twenty-five yards, he was unassailable. One plunge would take his huge frame behind a yet more impenetrable mass of bamboo thickets—he was, in fact, as safe as if we had never met.

Things, however, happen quickly in the jungle. It was impossible that his absence of mind could last, with the human taint blowing thus all over him. I could see that by creeping forward about a couple of yards and then bending low, it would be possible to take advantage of a small aperture in the tangled canes; but to do this I must come directly into his line of vision, and leave the slight cover from view which now favoured me. Moreover, there was a nasty fallen branch and a tussock of sharp grass in the way, over which, in protruding a slow-moving foot, I should have difficulty in passing with sufficient stealth, or balance. I can see that dreadful bit of ground now. It seemed impossible to circumvent it. However, the trial was made, and, slowly swaying on one leg I essayed the passage; drawing the other leg after me with due care. There now remained but one yard more, followed by a gentle, gradual subsidence on my "hunkers" for the shot—when, like lightning, the bull is on his legs, head half-turned, nose up, every muscle taut and tense—at last, then he had smelt us! Hitherto his head had been difficult to see clearly, but now the horns stood out sharply defined—a fine thick, widespread pair; a prize worth winning.

The bull's sudden uprising had altered everything in my favour, and his neck and shoulder were exposed. In an instant the ·350 was raised. And, just as the bull whipped round in my direction, certain now of the whereabouts of his disturber, the little rifle cracked. The bullet struck in the centre of his massive neck, a very little in front of the point of his shoulder, as I afterwards found—rather too low for a "knock-out" blow; and instantly a black mountain

of flesh came smashing through the bamboos, right on top of me! Turning suddenly to his left, the bull stood for a moment, head and tail up, nostrils dilate, a splendid picture of taurine wrath, seeking his enemy—but, unfortunately for him, with his entire side exposed! A quick but steady shot, released with the little ivory bead resting in exactly the right spot, a fraction, if anything, behind the shoulder, is followed by a headlong rush directly at me. I dart back towards the shelter of the upturned roots of a fallen tree, up whose slanting trunk I see my jungle-man springing like a startled squirrel, and turn again in my vantage-ground ready with my third shot—three more rounds ready in the magazine. But it is not required. The great bull is swaying. He turns tottering to his right; halts a moment; then, with an earth-shaking subsidence and a splintering of bamboos, rolls over and over with all four legs kicking the air. Taught by many a slip in bygone days, I "mak' siccar" with a shot raking forward into heart and lungs of the prostrate mass; but it is not required, for, with a low groan, the bull has already expired.

Testing him with a big stone, which strikes one of his massive horns, I am shortly gloating over my prize. It was six years since I had last slain any of the Indian pachyderms, and this colossus appeared to my rather rusty recollections to be little smaller than a bull buffalo; so I found myself drawing comparisons between the two animals. A couple of short "pip-pips" on the whistle had summoned the men, a row of happy grins, as they proceeded to expatiate on the little scene just brought to a successful conclusion. Then came the measuring of horns, and general admiring. Long bamboos were cut, in default of the measuring tape, left behind to-day; and by their aid, and that of withes of the ever-handy *mahul* creeper, records were obtained, to be later converted into feet and inches.

Thus smoking the cheroot of peace, after a pull at the big aluminium water-bottle and a couple of plantains, I rested, and ruminated on the huge carcase at my side. Black as coal, with a soft, hairy, oily skin—the great face and head

hoary, noble, and dignified—the worn teeth—several of which had dropped out—we computed his age at eleven or twelve years. And then, thoughts of the rifle—this infant prodigy, this mighty little persuader of great bisons—he must be cleaned and petted! A second time had the ·350 astonished me by its extraordinary power, and a second time I found myself wondering whether its work on this bull as well as the first *had* been mere lucky chance, mere "fluking." To-day I confess to having experienced a slight breaking down of my scepticism as to its power of dealing with big game. Again had I used the solid, soft-nosed bullet, and again had it scored. True, the bull had not been floored on the spot, there had been no felling blow—but he had not covered twenty yards ere falling dead; besides which there had been a reserve of four shots ready for instant use, with perfect facility in reloading while springing aside and playing hide-and-seek if necessary. A feeling of confidence had been engendered—superior to that conferred by any of the excellent double-barrelled rifles I had used all these past years, where all depends on your two shots, one of which must be a stopper—unless you wish to find yourself doing a hurried bolt, fumbling now with the breach of your weapon, now for the cartridges, and unable therefore to keep an uninterrupted outlook for the thousand and one little things that may give your infuriated pursuer his chance.

But enough of this hobby of mine. I will force it on no man, but will simply leave it to the recital of the rest of the adventures in Bison Land to prove itself.

It was very late that afternoon when we returned to the dead bull, from our camp in the robber's cave; almost too late for the photographing which was our object. After again admiring the splendid evening view over the Khamosh Valley from the verge of the little plateau, we struggled back to camp by the light of a clouded moon, relays of groaning coolies bearing the severed head, an estimated weight of some hundred and twenty pounds. After dinner we essayed to weigh it, by means of a couple of spring balances hooked together;

but something snapped, and the smaller of the balances departed whizzing skywards, at about 2,000 foot seconds of initial velocity, luckily uninterrupted by nose or eye *en route*. A pint of beer marked the occasion this evening—and, after dinner, reclining in a luxurious deck-chair at the mouth of our sheltering cavern, it was sheer delight to renew our ties with the jungle, after all too long an absence. There were the same old nightjars with their soothing *chuckoo-chuckoo*, "ice-birds" with their weird calls, and the cry of a wakeful peacock from his roost in the depths of the great ravine at our feet. Ah! those jungle days! those jungle nights! Nothing—nothing can compare with them; and their memories, are they not a dream?

The rencontre with the bull I had killed on this occasion, the second bull shot in Bison Land, caused me to ponder to a certain extent on the characteristics of these animals, and wonder whether the tales of their ferocity or the accounts of their general timidity were to be given the greater credence. It was not the first time I had shot bison, but I had never had such wonderful opportunities of studying these animals before, for hitherto I had met them only at rare intervals and in small numbers, and they had almost invariably been excessively shy and wild; while the couple I had shot had shown no fight at all. This tale will unfold the ideas I have formed from my experiences in Bison Land; at present my remarks apply to this particular animal.

First of all, there was the extraordinary failure of this bull to detect a considerable party of men directly to windward and within some sixty yards of him. Can it be that most of the more consistently "solitary" bull bison are maimed, or deficient in one or more of their senses, and often owe their expulsion or defection from the herd to this rather than to age or physical weakness? Is it possible, therefore, that this bull, owing to some injury, may have lost the edge of his keen scenting powers?

When he did scent me, or us, however, there was no hesitation as to our direction; he had settled that at once.

Then there came the shot. Every shikari knows how animals misjudge the direction of a shot, especially in these days of smokeless powders, and how they will often rush blindly in the direction of the shooter. Most of us have been rushed at on occasion by such harmless and timid animals as deer, etc., and we know how such a blind rush on the part of a dangerous creature is often put down as a deliberate charge. This bull, however, had no such excuse for his determined advance in my direction. He had got my wind, he knew from which direction danger threatened; and he deliberately came for me. More than this, having missed his point in his first rush, he stood looking for me, and, guided by the second shot, again endeavoured to attack. It may, therefore, be taken for granted that he meant business.

In this instance we have the following conditions—which I noted for reference:—the bull had been previously startled by our intrusion earlier in the morning, he had winded me before I fired at him, we were at close quarters, and the jungle was fairly dense.

An interesting question now arises. What constitutes a "solitary" bull?

Several times in Bison Land I came on young bulls that were quite "solitary"—in the sense that no herd was in the immediate vicinity—but which carried unshootable heads. The inference was that they happened to be only temporarily absent from a herd. But why should young bulls alone be considered as "temporary solitaries"? Why should not the largest and oldest bulls also indulge in such a temporary separation? And is there such a thing as a truly and entirely solitary bull? So soon as an old bull carrying a decent head is found *solus*, by his lone, he is immediately dubbed a "solitary," in spite of the fact that he may merely have wandered away from a herd for a short time—even an hour or so. This, among people new to bison shooting, not infrequently results in the slaying of bulls with inferior heads, for with them a beast by itself is necessarily a "solitary," therefore, by all they have read or heard of, *must* be a big one!

Thus, I found myself musing, until I began to form an idea that it was only the halt, maimed, and blind old bulls that were the true "solitaries." But even here I found myself at fault, for, towards the close of my expedition, I killed a fine old bull who may have been said to be in his dotage. His teeth proclaimed the fact. He was also stone blind of one eye (which may have been injured in a fight, but more likely by a branch or bamboo), and had a general air of age. On the day I bagged him he was "solitary," on the previous day I had found him doing the "dog and string" business with a younger bull who was clearly acting as his "fag," and on the day before that he had been found lording it over a herd. His identity on each occasion was proved by a peculiarity in coloration, in fact, he was not to be "mistook." This, however, is anticipating, so I return to the thread of my narrative.

On the following day my companion and I went off together in a westerly direction. On our way we sighted one of the numerous four-horned antelope of this plateau, and I lent the ·350 to my friend, who, however, scored a miss. Farther on, a sambar stag, with rather inferior horns, was spied making off slowly through the dwarf date-palms ahead. My companion went after him, but without success. The plateau now contracted considerably, and, after crossing a high knoll covered with very nasty long, tangled dry grasses, we emerged at one end of a narrow col of bare rocky ground connecting two wider stretches of wooded plateau-tops. There was a sudden snort, and a rush to our left, and, clearing the edge of the jungle, a long line of bison went tittuping off. We counted ten of them, their rear being brought up by a couple of bulls, which, although apparently full grown, bore heads scarcely larger than their cows. The whole had passed along the bare col in full view, and finally disappeared into the edge of the forest leading to the heavy woods of the slopes below.

It was still early, the morning fogs had not long since evaporated, and we continued on our way, separating, and

each taking his own line round the next hill. Here, I started a couple of *jungli bakris*, and about a mile farther on walked right into the middle of another and still larger herd of bison. It was extremely interesting to watch these great creatures. They left the long grass on the excessively steep hill-side and moved off down a spur that fell abruptly into a horribly deep valley to my left; and, in my search for a bull, I followed them into this, marvelling once more at the activity of these huge beasts on the precipitous hill-side. The strain on the forelegs and shoulder of a bison must be enormous as this heavy brute plunges down its native hills; yet it picks its way like any of the small deer, the neat sharp hoofs serving it equally well over rock and down the loose soft soil, through long grass in which lies many a tripping-up fallen tree-trunk; and all without a mistake.

Hearing a yelling far below, in the path taken by the departing herd, I descended, and found a party of jungle-men, with bows and arrows and a motley collection of dogs. One of them had nearly been run down by the bison—at least so I gathered from his pantomime and a few words I had already picked up—and had sped an arrow into one of the huge flanks as it hurtled past him. He appeared to harbour little hope as to the result of his shot, however, and none of his fellows seemed to give a thought to following up their ponderous quarry. I made them take up the tracks with me for a time, but they gradually melted away, so, seeing no use in continuing after these bison, I descended yet farther to the bottom of the glen ere climbing the far side. Here I found myself in one of those beautiful spots already described. Gurgling streams bordered by giant tree-ferns, huge, soaring, orchid-clasped trees, myriads of butterflies flitting over the dense carpeting of "hot house" ferns, and the "tintinnabulation" of innumerable mosquitoes. The ascent beyond the narrow valley was heart-breaking. I had not long since left a comparatively sedentary mode of life behind me, I had for the previous two years never even seen my old love, the jungle, and the stifling heat as I climbed that apparently unending

hill took it out of me by the bucketful. A couple of hours brought me to the top of the main plateau again, where I rested under a tree, and, by some extraordinary chance, met the men who had lost me three hours earlier. Camp was reached about 2 p.m.

The rest of the day was spent in testing the utility of a contrivance I had hit on to solve the problem of the portable machan. It may be of interest to give a description of this.

For many years I had experimented with various ideas for a form of portable perch to use in tiger and other shikar, and many had been the shifts and expedients evolved, without any real success. Ladders, wooden frameworks, all sorts of things had been tried, and had given satisfaction—up to a certain point. Suddenly one day came a new idea—that of a network platform—attachable by ropes to the branches of a tree, a kind of web, in fact, in which, lurking like a huge spider, I should await my prey. It seemed rather funny! At any rate it might be worth a trial. So, after a certain amount of difficulty, some native fishermen were persuaded to manufacture the article, as follows:

A piece of netting, about six feet square, was made up of cord about the size of English window-cord, with a mesh of about 1½ inches. The edging or border of this was composed of thin cotton rope the size of a stout clothes-line, and to the corners of this piece of netting were attached lengths of cordage which enabled one to tie the net to various branches. After a few trials we found that a really good thing had been hit on at last. The net and its ropes are very light, and can be carried over the arm—or may be used for putting various small articles in on a march. Owing to its elasticity this net machan may be tied into almost any kind of tree possessing a roughly horizontal branch or two. If there is no branch where required, one can be cut and lashed at the required spot. The corner ropes, being long, may be attached to quite distant supports.

A man gets up the tree, and silently ties the net machan

into position in a few minutes, pulling it as taut as possible, to prevent undue bagging when occupied. We found it useful to have a few extra pieces of cord wherewith to tighten up any loose portion of the edging here and there. A blanket or rug in the centre of the spider's-web gives the occupant a more comfortable seat, also a cushion or two to lean against. Rifle and other accessories find plenty of room. The occupant may turn quickly, and in any direction, for a shot in a beat, the machan occupies the minimum of space, and is absolutely silent. For a night vigil it is equally suitable. You can turn and shift about in the net without a sound or a creak, and it is eminently comfortable—too comfortable indeed, on occasion! You can, at a pinch, shoot right down through the netting itself, should a beast come and sit underneath you. In short, I say to brother shikaris—try it!

We had a long itinerary before us through Bison Land, and several hundreds of miles to traverse, so, after five days in our robber's cave, we arranged to depart for fresh fields. Having bagged two bulls, I felt like pattering a *Nunc Dimittis*. My companion had slain a good bull in a distant ravine, and, having first of all seen most of our kit packed off to the shores of the Khamosh River, I accompanied him thither on photography intent. This bull lay dead in a deep little valley filled with fairly thick jungle, and it was a pity that we did not exercise our usual caution on approaching the carcase, for, as we came down the hill, a panther came out of a thicket to see what was the matter, and, having seen, disappeared at once. When we reached the carcase we discovered what the panther had been at. Bison hide is pretty thick, as that panther had found; for he had not been able to get through the skin, although he had made stupendous efforts. So he had devoted his energies to all protuberances. Both ears of the bull had been chewed clean off, and great liberties had been taken with those portions of his frame which we were in the habit of appropriating as walking-sticks or cutting whips. Photography was a failure, so, after a while, my friend was left sitting in a tree, awaiting the panther's

eturn, while I returned to the cave. After tea that evening, departed across country towards the Khamosh, whither ur servants and kit had gone by another way. Following ne plateau, I found myself, just before sunset, on one of the reat bluffs overhanging the gorge already referred to. I had een ploughing my way through thick jungle and masses of rickly dwarf date-palm, and suddenly emerged on a sharp eadland of grey rock forming the extreme eastern scarp of ne mountain. Seated on a rock, I marvelled at the scene, a ruly glorious one. Immediately at my feet, on the very nose f the headland, a stone might have been dropped a sheer x or seven hundred feet to the highest portions of rock and ubble that protruded from the jungle far below. More dizzy lmost than the actual precipice, these sharp spurs ran steeply own, with a few hardy shrubs and bamboos clinging to their mooth sides, and were there lost to the eye beyond the con-exity of the lower slopes. Far below rose a jumble of minor eaks and gullies, and the whole, uniting into one vast tilted neet of jungle, fell straightway 2,000 feet to the thin, tor-uous, but very deep Khamosh.

A great amphitheatre of flat-topped hills ran round from ny seat, its northern horn jutting out over the river higher p. A drove of short-tailed monkeys played on the sheer ocks hard by. From the depths rose the crowings of many ed jungle-fowl. Beyond the Khamosh rose up tier on tier f hills higher than our own. The tracks of bison existed ght to the verge of my eyrie, and I knew they were equally umerous on all the surrounding hills. What thousands of ne great wild cattle must exist on the mountains over which y eye now ranged! Long may it be so. Few may be the unters that come to hunt here. Guarded by a terrible iasma and malaria as they are, it is probable that those olitudes will support their herds of bison for all time. Some ho have penetrated them in search of shikar have returned o die of malaria, others have beaten an early retreat, and ur own incursion is viewed in certain quarters as dangerous nd a forlorn hope.

But night is enshrouding the opposite hills, and our destination lies at the edge of that river so very far below us. We must be off. Is there any path? Our jungle-man says "No!" He has never been this way before. There is no path, and nobody has ever been up or down this part of the hills. We turn and push through some bamboos at our backs and startle a small deer, which darts at great speed into the grass. Arriving at the southern edge, we peer over—the hill descends in short scarps alternating with steep grass-slopes—quite impassable. But there is one long, sharp-edged rib of jagged grey rock that leans against the hill like a buttress. It is too far to return to our cave of the last five days, and thence take the trodden track. Here we are, and here we must go. Bamboos help us, sliding down, crawling, and jumping, for the first three or four hundred feet. Then a deep fissure in the rock-buttress arrests our further descent, and the situation requires thought. It is getting dusk, the hill-side is excessively steep, and a slip may mean all sorts of things, for below us there is a convex slope, and may-be a precipice beyond! Suddenly we see that the angle where the long, buttress-like spur meets the hill-side looks soft. By sticking to this it may be possible to reach better going. This niche is, therefore, reached with the aid of a bent-down bamboo, and, acting as pioneer, I dig little footholds with the heels of my boots. Some five hundred feet more are accomplished thus, when the angle becomes almost a sheer drop, and we have to take to the rocks of a tiny watershoot, which luckily springs up just here. Darkness was now on us, and the moon, a night after her full, was only just clearing the horizon. The incessant jumping and slithering from rock to rock with a precious rifle in my hand, had now reduced me to a jelly, and this dark rocky gully was radiating a furious pent-up heat. Another four hundred feet or so, and my orderly falls, dents the barrels of my gun; then my knees give out, and I have to sit down for the second time. On again, in a stifling atmosphere, we left the gully just above a precipice (which we tested by throwing stones over its edge) and dug our way

ack to the angle of the buttress spur. The remaining descent as done in the dark, the moon having clouded over, and then e found ourselves in an abominable dim thicket of terrible orns. From this we at length emerged, scratched and sweat-aked, on a tiny clearing tilted at an angle of about 45°, but a elief indeed (my orderly described it as a *maidán*, or plain !), ith the lights of our boats glimmering on the wide sands of ne Khamosh, and the river itself gleaming close below us. A ort walk brought us to the shore, and so ended a most npleasant experience, out of which we were lucky to escape o easily. Ferried over to the opposite sandy shores, I found comfortable dinner and bed. One of the boatmen, a Mus-lman, had been stung by a scorpion—or, as he insisted, by *góm*, or centipede, and he maintained an incessant and irri-ating supplication to Allah all night long. What remedies possessed were applied in vain, even the threat to put him the river if he didn't *chup* !

Next morning, rising at dawn, I was enjoying a delicious wim in the cool green waters of the Khamosh when my com-anion arrived from the hills—but without his panther. reakfast over, up went the big sail, and we were off—" off to évipatnam in the morning." A stiff breeze bowled us along t a great pace, and, ere long, the hills in which we had spent uch happy days were sliding out of sight.

For the next two or three days we journeyed, partly by oat, and partly by road. Each evening we sallied forth om our temporary halting-place and sat up for panthers, but ithout luck. At one place, which by the way is notorious or its deadly fever, we had a beat for bears.

A rocky hill rose some four hundred feet from typically bear " country, a hill full of caves and holes, and built up f enormous blocks of stone rather like the rocky " droogs " f the south of India ; and thither we repaired to find a large ody of beaters ready for the fray. It was fairly early in the orning, and bears might still be expected to be lying out n the lower slopes of their stronghold. An energetic person ith a bow and many arrows led us to our posts, peering into

every chance hole and cave *en route* with an inebriate jaunti ness that left nothing to be desired, till we plucked him ou and requested him to stick to business.

About half-way up the hill we at last struggled to a kind o ledge with several trees jutting from it, and drew for places This was the first occasion on which I actually used my new net machan, and I was delighted with it. We put it up, in a very few moments, in an impossible-looking kind of tree and it was most effective and comfortable.

The beat was a very slow one, and animals seem to have broken back several times. At length I heard a sound I had not heard for long—much too long—the rapid *Bruff-hah Bruff-hah* of a hastily approaching bear. My companion occupied a tree about thirty yards to my right, and suddenly I heard a "Bang!" from his ball-and-shot gun, an outrageous hooting, and saw a very annoyed bear dancing an ursidæan cake-walk under his tree, gnashing his jaws in rage as he gazed up longingly at his tormentor. Next moment the bear had gone. "Bang!" again from the ball-and-shot gun without result.

Not long after this a shout from my friend, and I saw a bear darting along a ledge in the rocks about forty yards above me. Up went the ·350, and an extremely lucky snap shot resulted in a sudden tumble, and a kicking of hairy black legs from the edge of the rock. Presently the body of the bear came trundling over the edge, and, with a bump or two *en route*, whizzed through the air and landed with a crash in a bamboo clump just in front of me. A few of the strang wails peculiar to *Melursus ursinus*, and we were shortly hauling out his shaggy corpse. I had used the soft-nosed *hollow* pointed bullet on this occasion, and was as pleased with the effect of the little ·350 on this bear as on the bison.

My companion meanwhile had marked *his* bear into a deep cave, into which it had disappeared with a bawl just after his second shot. We had brought a number of small red Chinese crackers with us, luckily, and in a short time found a sort of "chimney" opening out of the top of the cave. So, with th

id of a long bamboo and the crackers, the inside of that ave soon became a pandemonium, impossible for the most bstinate bear to withstand ; but there was no result such as e hoped for. I finally discovered that this cavern had everal passages opening a "way out," and leading to the dge whence my quarry had lately rolled. It was the same ear, therefore, at which both of us had fired !

As this part of the country was not likely to yield us any- ning more, and since we were but journeying towards a istant goal, we resumed our marching next day. A halt was ade at one of our stages—a very picturesque little valley rrounded by lofty hills—in the hopes of getting a local tiger kill. Here we found little game, although the place was id to be very good at other times of the year. The tiger as a wanderer, and would not touch any of our numerous aits, and the only "kill" we got was by a panther ; so, after few days, our journeying was resumed.

It was towards the end of a long and trying march in great eat that at last we came in sight of the first of our promised nd. For days we had been toiling over the roughest of rrow hill tracks, and through dense jungle, when we sud- enly emerged in a small valley covered with rice cultivation. igh jungly hills shut us in on every side, but beyond them, wering into the blue sky, was to be seen a region of bare een downs crowning a lofty, plateau-like formation. No in had fallen in the brown lower hills, but those huge bare dges had evidently received a plentiful downpour. This ountain, then, was the great Gaurigosha, for which we had urneyed so far, and which was to prove itself to us one of e most wonderful bison grounds in existence—a truly traordinary spot.

We found it very oppressive in the Turkish bath tem- rature of that punchbowl valley ; but it seemed injudicious start the coolies until late afternoon. Our ascent of the g hill was therefore rather delayed.

Owing to transport and other difficulties, about half of our t was despatched by the beaten track to a village lying

in a large valley some thirty miles distant and on the far side of Gaurigosha, to which we were to make our way after our stay on the hill; and we ourselves marched fairly light, with supplies, etc., for a limited time only.

After crossing the dried-up rice-fields, our route, a mere footpath, led into a very pretty little glen, through the narrow walls of which gurgled a delightful little stream that had its source in the mountain masses ahead of us. Its bed, full of the ferns and mosses that luxuriate wherever water is in evidence in Bison Land, was overhung by huge old trees mostly mango, forming a regular arcade of leafy shade. The mangoes were all ripe, and the ground was strewn with great store of the fallen fruit, piles of discarded mango-stones marking the best trees, where parties of jungle-men—and bears—had been regaling themselves.

Every step brought us into more lovely scenery, each corner we turned revealing a yet more charming view. After our long marches through the hot dry country of the past weeks the change to the vivid greensward and the thick enclosing woods was charming, and the air cooled rapidly as we followed the little vale to its head.

After about four miles or less, the path suddenly turned and climbed the side of the valley, becoming ever steeper and it was considerably after sunset that we arrived on a ridge and found a small jungle village. While waiting near here to let the baggage-coolies come up, the headman, a remarkably sturdy little fellow, busied himself in furnishing string cots whereon to rest, but was extremely reticent as to the shikar to be had in the neighbourhood. In the quiet evening light this retired spot, with big woody ravines branching off in all directions, looked extremely likely ground, and our spirits were cheered in consequence.

The next stage, of about a mile, was covered in the failing twilight, when we reached another little collection of stockaded huts. The inhabitants at this jungly place had already retired for the night and closed the one narrow doorway in their stockade; but a shout brought them out. Here w

ested under a clump of orange and lime trees, while our ortège struggled in, and bamboo torches were cut and repared. There seemed to be great disinclination to move rther to-night, but we were determined to push on. This eep valley we were in simply hummed with mosquitoes, and ne undergrowth and fresh green grass seemed to exhale a estilential miasma. Besides this, the task we had set us was ncomplete ; we had arranged to sleep on Gaurigosha that ight. Everything being ready, therefore, we started off again.

The climb presently became excessively steep, and, looking ack from the head of the little column, we could see the tail f the caravan far below toiling up the precipitous path with he line of bamboo torches at intervals shedding a red glare n the surrounding jungle and the black, imp-like forms of ur struggling porters. Our narrow track then seemed to kirt a precipitous chasm. The torches, raised aloft, revealed othing but a great void, with the remote sound of flowing ater ; while stones set rolling by our feet disappeared mys-eriously in silence.

That our journey was taking us through the most extra-rdinarily picturesque scenery was evident by the torchlight nrown here and there on our surroundings. This last portion f our march seemed never-ending, and was fraught with rouble for the unhappy coolies, whose task was no light one. he breeze had dropped, and the atmosphere became oppres-vely hot and damp ; dripping with sweat, we toiled wearily pwards for hour after hour, deluded at turns by apparent ummits, one skyline being reached only to reveal yet another oming high above us. Late at night it was that we at last merged from jungle to bare hill-sides, the tops of which were eing swept by a boisterous wind as yet unfelt by us ; and, fter a short distance along their sides, the path brought us uddenly to a little dip in which we ran up against some natched huts erected by a friend. A cold wind was blowing alf a gale in this exposed spot, a dangerous change in ur sweat-soaked condition. We seemed to be more or ss right on top of the hills—but it was very dark, and all

we could see was that we were surrounded by low ridges covered with short green grass and stunted dwarf date-palm bushes. After a scratch meal, we collected grass screens, and, arranging our bedding, fell asleep at once. Next day, just before dawn, I woke. The wind had dropped, and there was a curious silence—almost the same silence that one associates with a heavy fall of snow. Raising myself, I could see that we were enveloped in dense vapour. Presently the cloud slowly lifted and I saw that our hill and its continuation eastward was the only ground not smothered up in dense mist. The bank of woolly cloudland extended from the farthest horizon to the sides of Gaurigosha, on which it impinged, a mottled cotton-woolly expanse. Far to the east it was turning a delicate blush colour. Rested as we were after our arduous tramp of the previous evening, the calm morning was delightful—cool and invigorating, and after lying there until daylight I was preparing to throw off my blankets and have a look round, when I noticed some of the servants collected at the corner of one of the grass huts gazing at something in evident awe.

As I joined them, and followed their gaze, I saw that only a hundred yards or so from our huts the ground sloped down steeply into a shallow valley that lay some two hundred feet lower than the spot on which I stood. The steep sides and most of the slopes of this flat-bottomed depression were thickly wooded; it was about a thousand yards wide; and in its centre lay a large patch of evidently marshy, bright green grass and vegetation. All round this secluded and sunken vale rolled the queer, undulating, bare plateaus that as we were to find, crown all the higher hill-tops in this strange region—bare and rather stony grassland, which, at a distance, looks exactly like golf-links. To my right the smooth-swarded mountain-side rolled billowing, with steep connecting "cols," until it culminated, some four miles eastward, in the main peak of Gaurigosha itself. But the scenery, rare and strange as it was, formed but a passing impression, for there, before me, not half a mile away, the

hole of that little woody vale seemed black with looming apes of bison!

Bison grazed on the succulent grass; bison wandered about and out of the leafy trees; bison agitated the undergrowth; ison in fact were everywhere! Then, as I gazed in amaze-ent, my eye caught some creeping things beyond the hollow, n the distant "golf-links" three-quarters of a mile off—and ! —five more great bison grazing calmly along in the open!

At this moment one of the coolies, who had been down the des of the hollow to fetch water from the neighbouring spring, eturned with the news that two sambar stags were fighting ach other about a couple of hundred yards from the huts.

Dressing and chota hazri I do not remember on that memor-ble morning. All I know is that next moment my companion nd I were off, rifle in hand. We had tossed for, or otherwise greed on our respective directions and I took the left hand oute, keeping to the edge of the downs and working round the far side of the hollow. As I hastened in this direction, was able to see more directly into the dip below the huts. here was my companion making his way down, just above ne spring, and only some three hundred yards ahead of him the bottom of the declivity, standing under a large tree company with another and smaller bison, grazed a large ack bull. It appeared later on that there must have been out twenty bison in that little valley that morning. Having ready noted, with the aid of my glasses, that there was no otable bull among the five bison grazing on the opposite golf-links," I walked round the edge of the hollow, without ncealment, expecting every moment to hear the report of my iend's rifle. However, something went wrong, apparently, d no shot came.

Circumambulating the "golf-links," I approached the herd five bison for a closer inspection, when I noticed a big lone w coming up the hill-side. She climbed the slope, passed thin 150 yards of me, as I stood stock-still in the stark en, and then went on to join the herd.

There was little cover of which to avail myself, the bison

were feeding unsuspiciously along, making slowly in an easterly direction, and merely by availing myself of slight undulation in the ground, walking upright, I got within about 150 yards of them.

My previous slight experience of these animals had been of a very brief nature—they had been sighted—or had sighted one—for a moment or two ere disappearing—mere glimpses in thick jungle; but here was a whole herd in the open, grazing along like domestic cattle, and taking no more notice of me than tame beasts would. With my binoculars I could see the hair on their skins—six big cows they were, all of them very black and bull-like. All the full-grown bison cows in this country seem very dark, and it is dangerous to take the colour of an animal as a guide to its sex—particular care is required, therefore, when shooting in thick cover, and one ought to wait until the head and horns can be distinctly seen and judged. After watching these extremely interesting creatures and their ways, for a long time, I became aware of strange noises rising from the valley at my back—"Bison Hollow," as we called it thereafter—and, retiring to the edge of the fall, could see the jungle down below being shaken at intervals. Low soft moos, and other sounds like a herd of elephants, rose on the morning air, and bamboos creaked. There was evidently a large number of bison in the Hollow. But was there a shootable bull?

Gazing across the valley I could still see my companion's big bull, close to the edge of the jungle. He had not moved far from the tree under which he had been grazing when I first sighted him. But something had evidently gone wrong with my friend's stalk, for he was nowhere to be seen, and much time had elapsed. It was tantalising to see that great black bull standing there, waiting to be shot; and my whole soul itched to go for him! There were those other bison close below me, and among them might be another bull; but if I should fire a shot it might spoil my friend's stalk at the critical moment, so, remembering similar disappointments which had overtaken me, I sat down to wait and see what happened a

the other side of the valley. Presently the black dot began to move slowly. I put up the binoculars, and the great brute was slowly entering the edge of the thick jungle, grazing and browsing as he went. No sign of my friend—but what is that minute brown object crawling along about a hundred yards this side of the bull, creeping slowly forward on the green grass of the glade? The black figure of the bull is just disappearing into the trees into which his mate had already faded from sight, and the brown figure of my friend is crawling along nearer, but now in the wrong direction! I swear softly to myself. Could a shout reach those distant ears and put him right? But no; it is too far off. The figure of the bull has gone, and that irritating little figure on the grass is working *so* hard, and all to no purpose, for his chance has now quite gone!

It is now my turn. There may be a decent bull in the herd of bison which I know is in the jungle down below. Calling up my man, I explain matters to him. He is to walk round the edge of the hollow, and descend beyond those trees. Then he is to get on the far side of that thick bit of jungle and come slowly in my direction, giving the bison his wind. I shall remain in hiding near this crest; there is a shelf of rock and a tuft of long grass behind which to hide, and if the bison should come right or left up the slopes I can run along and intercept them.

From this spot one obtains a good view of the whole of this end of Gaurigosha. The stream draining "Bison Hollow" runs away to my left, boring through steep hill-sides clad with excessively thick jungle for about a mile and a half. Here it appears to twist round out of sight into a deep gorge. Towards this gorge converge all the valleys draining from this side of Gaurigosha, and, as the map shows me, their combined waters pour down a huge cleft, 1,500 feet deep, to seek the level of the lower or main valleys. Gaurigosha itself, four miles off, is seen to be a great mass of bare green rolling downs, capped by a coronet of grey rock. Even the smallest of the steep ravines draining its sides is crammed with dense jungle

almost to its source, and, as we afterwards find, flowing with abundance of water. One step, therefore, takes the mighty bison from his open grazing grounds into an extraordinarily thick matted jungle, full of ferns and maidenhair, shaded by clustering trees, and tied into a well-nigh impenetrable mass by hook-thorned rattan-canes. Truly Gaurigosha is a sanctuary. It is difficult to imagine that it could, even in the remote past, hold more bison than it did at the time of our visit, but I suppose it must have then afforded a home to even greater numbers. Doubtless we hit it off at the very time of year when it catches the earliest rain and the bison are crowding in from the surrounding country, attracted by the new grass—yet—it is a wondrous place.

But these thoughts are suddenly interrupted. My man has been gone for nearly an hour, when the sound of a cracking bamboo strikes on the ear. The mooings and other noises have ceased down there, and now there is a sense of something on the move. Presently a black object moves past an open space, and the flick of a tail is seen. A mass of leafage is violently shaken. Again all is quiet.

But the eye and ear are on the alert. There is the rolling of a stone or two on the hill-side immediately to our right, the sound of hoofs, and the back of a bison cow is seen climbing quickly up. She is followed at a little distance by more dark shapes. The noise increases, with the rattle of stones and the bursting through of canes and long dry grasses and reeds—all cows, alas! they come up the stiff slope in a long string, and the leader emerges, and stands on the open plateau 150 yards to my right. She trots uneasily forward again, and the herd comes after her. They stand for an instant, head in air, their grey muzzles suspiciously snuffing the wind; then they continue their trotting and shambling over the open. There are about ten of them and they are making in the direction of that other herd of six which has wandered away behind me. Suddenly, a considerable distance in the rear of the cows, a huge black object steps into the open—a bull? He follows his cows at a sharp trot; then breaks into a pon-

erous canter. His coal-black hide, his flapping dewlap, his ize, all proclaim him a full-grown bull—but a typical young erd bull; full-grown of body (probably little short of six eet high at the shoulder), but not of horns, which are sharp nd much curved. What a magnificent sight it is as these plendid creatures cross the open, right in front of me! I ad read every book on Indian sport that I could lay hands n, yet never found references to such extraordinary numbers f bison as these.

In these "Bison Land" reminiscences I have dropped light clues, left a faint track by which the keen shikari may ossibly divine its whereabouts, somewhat after the way in hich I did. But even then he will probably be a long way rom the consummation of his hopes. In addition to the atural difficulties that confront travellers in those regions here existed in my time certain *un*natural or artificial arriers. These and similar matters, however, belong to nother section of these musings.

After my return to camp at the huts, which I reached by aking a short cut across "Bison Hollow," premonitory ymptoms of fever—the result of the previous night's chill—anifested themselves; and for the next four or five days I was aid up with an attack of malaria. During this time we visited large village—the place where our heavy kit had been sent, here my companion sat up for a wandering tiger. On our ay to that place I stumbled one evening into our bivouac, alf-silly with a high temperature, had my mosquito-net rected over my bedding, and threw myself down. A little ater I heard a shout and urgent demands for hurricane-lamp nd stick!

My companion, looking to my condition, had discovered *karait*, a particularly venomous snake, sharing my couch; nd the power of the burning stage of jungle fever may be ealised by the fact that I would hardly rouse myself to roll ff the snake and permit of it being killed.

Our daily ration of quinine throughout that expedition was ½ grains a man: yet I do not think that any of us—eight,

including native orderlies and servants—escaped at least one attack of fever.

Eventually we once more ascended Gaurigosha. There had been no rain in the lower country, which was perfectly dry and withered up. No wonder, then, that the bison and other game were still collected on that remarkable hill.

The evening after our arrival at the huts once again my companion and I went out together for a stroll. "Bison Hollow" was empty, so we crossed the "golf-links" to the west for about a mile. Here we arrived about sunset at the edge of another hollow, but one not so thickly wooded. In this case again the streams joined, and formed marshy, boggy depressions full of long green grass and moss. The lower spurs were open and bare. Beyond this valley the hills seemed to sink. Their elevation being under 4,500 feet, the bare-topped plateaux were not in evidence, and the whole country, right up to the glow of sunset, was a rolling mass of jungly ridges. The little vale at our feet had a most "likely" appearance, which in no way belied its character when investigated on a subsequent occasion; but the failing light precluded the possibility of proper examination now.

Next morning I proceeded in a north-easterly direction, experiencing a stiff amount of dropping into and toiling out of the extraordinary rounded hollows and big knolls that connected our camp at the huts with the main mass of the Gaurigosha hill. Early as I started, and magnificent as was my hunting-ground, simply covered with bison tracks, old and new, not a single hide did I see. Proceeding about a couple of miles from camp, I found myself on the last sharp-backed ridge that leads on to the summit, a bare backbone of grey rock, only a few yards in width, with fresh green grass sprouting from the interstices of the out-cropping boulders. To right and left the hill-side fell abruptly for about a couple of hundred feet, when it met the dense and wall-like edge of tangled jungle. Below this level, nothing but jungle—jungle for hundreds of miles to N.E. and S.W. except where those other great hill-tops, sisters to Gaurigosha, lift their strange

décolleté shoulders from its green-blue clothing, a verdant garment that creeps into the hollows between their breasts, smothers all the lower features, and rounds every spur.

I was becoming acquainted with the local habits of the gaur of Gaurigosha, so went slowly along the ridge, confining my attention to the inner slopes of the hill. To my left one of the uplying ravines, already described, ran steeply down to the central stream draining away to the west, a deep-cut fissure choked with thickset jungle. Its upper feeders ran off in two or three directions, climbing into the main hill, and likewise thick with jungle to their very sources. From their depths rose the faint sound of running water, the occasional crow of a jungle-cock, and sometimes the queer chattering of the big red squirrel. To follow my present path would necessitate a long round over quite bare ground, and the hour was becoming too late for bison to remain in the open. This morning was clear, and devoid of mist, with nothing to tempt any old gaur to linger on his feeding-grounds. So we turned down the stony slope, and presently entered the jungle below, intending to descend to the stream-bed and climb the opposite hill to a likely-looking spur beyond it. At first came steep slopes of soft soil under fairly large trees, with no underwood; but presently we descended into an awful tangle of prickly stuff, like gigantic nettles, all dried and dead, and very trying to push through. The ground below them was carpeted with fallen leaves, and the unavoidable noise was great. After a while it became very dark, big trees closed up overhead, thorny rattan-canes tripped one up, and close ahead sounded the gurgling of the hidden stream. One could already smell the dank "miasma" of this deep glen, and, under the masses of now-green undergrowth, hear the pinging of its innumerable mosquitoes. Sliding down a greasy bank of red soil, we came on the water—a clear amber current running noisily through mossy boulders, drooped over by big thorny tree-ferns. In the few shafts of sunlight that pierced thus far danced the inevitable swarms of butterflies.

It was indeed a marvellous spot; perfect in its beauty,

perfect sanctuary for game ; yet only one of a thousand similar haunts, and they but a thousandth part of even more strikingly wonderful scenery and sanctuary all over " Bison Land."

As we halt on the edge of the stream there comes, sudden, startling, and close, a few yards ahead, the explosive " steam-escape " snort of a bison, and a mighty crash ! Instantly the rifle is gripped ready in nervous hands—the safety-catch swiftly disengaged ! Every sense at acutest tension ! Instinct, born of years of jungle-prowling, finds us at once motionless and silent, not a move. About half a minute elapses. Then we hear a stirring of the verdure about fifty yards away, and the splash of a hoof on wet stones. He must be creeping warily away across the stream.

There is, of course, not the slightest use in following on the bison's track ; the matted jungle is hopelessly dense—even on hands and knees one could not do it with any chance of success. So five minutes or so are permitted to elapse.

Three men are with me this morning, each following each at a suitable interval—closer in dense covert, farther off in more open ground. One of these is despatched uphill, back on our tracks, to watch the ground we have left at our backs. Two are deputed to remain in the ravine ; they are to stay there twenty minutes and then walk slowly upstream. I myself stealthily cross the stream bottom and climb the far side.

This woody glen is roughly three hundred yards wide, and the only chance of success is to get up its sides into the open, and endeavour to have the bison edged out quietly, so marking him into some place where he may be approached with a chance of success. I had taken up a position on a point of rock commanding the little valley and sat there some time when I heard and saw evidence of the men approaching in the dense covert below me ; but our trouble was in vain, for suddenly, half a mile away to my right and not far from the spot where my " backstop " scout should have been, but was not, my eye caught a movement—a great black bull calmly

limbed the hill, crossed the ridge, and disappeared beyond ! He had sneaked back !

Two hours later we had tracked him through some very difficult ground across a bare col and now approached the dge of the jungle into which his tracks led. High-lying as his covert was, it soon became excessively thick, and ere enetrating into it more than a couple of hundred yards I ad again become a perspiring atom creeping as noiselessly as ossible through a dense mass of the giant nettle-like growth. o my left lay the shallow depression I followed, and in it, as cautiously picked a way forward, with an eye ever on the resh track of the bull, I suddenly heard a deep breathing, bout fifteen yards away.

The breathings were very similar to the sounds emitted y a tiger when he suspiciously winds one in a tree at night, nd presently the "nastiness" of them increased. The eafage shook, and I soon looked down on a big black back owly passing parallel to my course. The "nettles" were o tall that they almost hid his great frame—for sure enough was the same old solitary bull—and I now know that I hould have waited for a clearer shot ; but, at the moment, felt that there was enough to go by, I had the greatest onfidence in the ·350, and so, picking out, as I thought, a pot just behind the top of his shoulder, I fired straight down nto it.

With the report of the shot there was a short rush, which id the great brute from view, while, with another cartridge nstantly transferred from magazine to chamber, I stood aiting for another and if possible better view of my old riend. Nor had I long to wait ! There was a scattering of ticks and jungle, and a huge grey head plunged out of them lmost straight at me. To fire now might have been to bring im directly down on me, and I know the odds against the uccess of a snapshot at a bison's head. I held my fire. In moment the bull, his black bulk towering almost over me ow that he had left the watercourse and reached my level, ame to a sudden halt, and, head up, glared and snorted

about him. I had retired a few steps, and behind me could hear the hurried footfalls of the scattering jungle men. The bull heard them too. He whipped round and looked straight into my eyes. Whether he really spotted me or not I cannot tell, but undoubtedly, for me, the psychological moment had arrived. All that could be seen of the brute was the great staring, snorting head, with a very fine pair of horns, and into this I now fired three rapid shots. There was a crashing and tearing of undergrowth ; the head had disappeared ; and I caught a glimpse of an ochreous rump rapidly retiring. Rushing forward, I emerged into a small comparatively open space—alas ! had I known of its existence I might have manœuvred so as to get a fair shot—and sped another bullet at the bull just as he plunged into a mass of thick stuff. It was a miss !

Astonished that the bullet which I had first placed on his shoulder should have had no effect by this time, I now proceeded to examine the scene of the affray. Of the effect of the hurried shots blazed into that snorting head I had no great faith. The " braining " of a bison with a front shot is no easy matter—nor, indeed for the matter of that, with a shot from any angle, save from behind ; for the bony processes of the skull, and their shape, are likely to deflect a bullet from the medulla. Besides this, a bullet missing the head is unlikely to strike the body of the " end-on " beast at any but a deflecting angle. However, the effect of the rapid fire into his face had served to change his mind and divert him from his apparent purpose of toying with my inanimate body. Of course it is possible that his rush and subsequent behaviour may have been nothing but a desire to locate the danger, and then flee from it—but in such sudden and swift affairs 'tis better to assume *malice prepense* on the part of one's *vis-à-vis* than credit him with philanthropic leanings.

Well, I had a long, long day after that bull—we tracked him doggedly, yea, into eventide itself—and I do not see why the reader should be forced to share the tedium of that distressing work. At times, crawling on hands and knees

ve would come on a spot where the poor old chap had lain lown to rest, and there were moments when the heart beat ast and the mind grasped the possibilities of a charge by a reat maddened brute in such frightfully thick cover. The ull had travelled some four miles, and circling, crossed his racks of the morning, before it got too dark to do anything nore with his tracks in covert. Twice, in creeping along on is trail, we surprised sambar. Finally we gave up until the norrow, and in the glow of sunset emerged from the shadows f that gloomy jungle to the uplying downs, whence we turned adly towards camp. The guardian spirit of Gaurigosha, owever, must have now relented towards the tired and dis-irited shikari. She decided to give him with two hands what he had, all that day, withheld with one! We top a gentle ise on the rolling downs, green downs bathed in the orange low of the departing Indian sun, green jungle tipped with urnished gold—and lo! half a mile onward, in prolongation f the bull's line, two monstrous shapes, one *couched* (at his hour!) one afoot, are out on the smooth grass, by the ungle's edge! Down go the men, squatting in a hollow, and ff we speed, rifle in hand, working against time and praying hat the fading light may last. The contours of the ground re favourable and we have no difficulty in running and odging to within a couple of hundred yards—but beyond hat, cover there is none. Even the dwarf date-palms are bsent.

The great black bulks loom up ominously in the swift-alling twilight. How huge they look! How dare man ttack with this slender pop-gun and its tiny missile! How nall Lilliputian wile match such mighty strength?—and the nind conjures up a vividly unpleasing little scene, a miserable, odging biped, not a scrap of cover, and. . . .

"Go on, hurry up, the light's going!" bids an inward oice. "There; straight ahead: you can get within easy ange by bending low. . . . There you are! Only eighty ards . . . that's the wounded one—the big one. *Look out!* Ie's trying to get up! What? a bit of stuff on the foresight.

Pick it off, quick! There; now you have him. . . ." *Bang-futt!*

Got him? Yes! Over he rolls, kicking furiously; now he is actually up on his legs and blundering towards the precipitous jungle-edge. . . . Bang!

We sprint forward, working the bolt in our stride, and arrive panting at the sudden brow. Hooray! A black mass and great, kicking, white-stockinged legs fifty yards below, that now disappear from view in the obscurity. A few slow crashings. Farther down, the upper branches of a tree that suddenly jar and quiver. . . .

And there, next morning, a foregone conclusion, we found him. As I reached the scene of the previous evening's adventure, a fair-sized sambar stag was feeding peacefully on a neighbouring spur, and shortly afterwards, happening to look up—ye gods!—on one of the bare green shoulders of Gaurigosha was a concourse of large black objects! Bison! Yes! With the glasses I awesomely counted eighteen of them. They were about a mile and a half away. And as they covered the whole crest-line of a big spur, there is little doubt that yet more of the wild cattle were there hidden by the curve of the slope!

And so I bade farewell to this wondrous hill. At its northern foot, as we tramped away, we encountered a surprising relic of long-dead civilisation—a grove of orange and pummalo trees, smothered in jungle—and found that this was the site of an ancient village, deserted long ago, 'twas said, on account of a "man-eater," probably a leopard. The fruit was all but ripe, especially the pummaloes, and we carried away a good coolie-load of them. I ever delighted in *Citrus decumana*, the shaddock (a monster form of grape-fruit), and the great round fruits, each as big as a young football, kept us going for a long time. Nothing can be more refreshing than their sharp tonic flavour in hot weather—and the thermometer was up to 112° in the deep valleys of this strange country. Precious days of shikar leave do not permit of 'ologies other than *zoön*, but it was evident that this was an "unusual" pair

IN BISON LAND

A FORGOTTEN SHRINE

of India, with an obscure history. One would suddenly come across ruined temples lurking unknown in a tangle of "primeval" vegetation; and, resting to admire the magnificently designed and executed block stonework with its beautiful carvings, would ponder awhile on the cultured minds of those long-dead days that had produced such exquisite art. All ruins are saddening; but the sight of those noble, forgotten shrines aroused feelings of the most utter contempt for the degenerate simians that nowadays eke out their worthless, sago-swilling existence in those regions.

Of our subsequent wanderings much might be told—how we journeyed, where we stopped, what sport we had with other kinds of game, and what of the rod and spoon. But my tale is of bison—in "Bison Land"—besides which there is surely no need to afford yet more clues to those readers who seek so disinterestedly the whereabouts of this delightful land? Have I not mentioned by name the Poshída Pass, the valley of the Bilkul Khamosh River, Gaurigosha itself, and my own itinerary via Malumnepur! What more is required? Yet remaineth to tell the tale of the closing days of that delightful trip—the salt-lick time, after the first heavy rain had come—a period even yet fuller of bison than that which preceded it!

The year of our visit was marked by abnormal weather.

In those regions rain usually falls to a considerable extent, in heavy showers, at least a month before the breaking of the monsoon proper; and our plans and itinerary had been made out in anticipation of normal conditions. So it was that the Khamosh ranges and Gaurigosha were the only places where as yet we had "struck 'ile," that is to say, as regards the extraordinary plethora of bison of which I write.

From this, however, it need not be inferred that no bison were in evidence except at the two wonderful places mentioned. The whole country was "Bison Land," and we found it peppered with them everywhere, scattered about all over the hills and valleys; but not elsewhere in such concentrated numbers

as we had heard of and been led to expect. During our marches, long tramps through country rarely trodden by a sahib, bison would cross our very path, or we would find plentiful tracks in localities suited to the requirements of the wild cattle. Large numbers of them were also seen from time to time—a herd here and a herd there—with a few solitary bulls ; but the part of the country we had now entered was the region of the salt-licks, and, to set these attractions in full swing, heavy rains are required.

Day after day, therefore, the sky was anxiously scanned. Where was the rain ? When would it come ? Whither should we bend our steps ? It might prove that this was destined to be a dry year, with a belated monsoon, and, in that case, our leave would expire ere the salt-lick season set in ! Thus it came about that we turned our attention to other game.

Bison were meanwhile to be found ; but not in such numbers as to repay the search for big bulls. We had been spoiled for ordinary bison-shooting. The extraordinary experiences of Gaurigosha had rendered us *blasés !*

It was in such mood that we met a good many bison in our stepping aside after other things, but none sufficiently tempting.

Only ten days' shooting now remained—and yet no rain had fallen beyond a couple of showers ; so I was forced, with much reluctance, to leave much of the salt-lick country behind and set out on my long tramp towards home.

On the very first day of the return march, which followed a different route from that we had taken on entering the country, down came the monsoon, ushered in by a terrific thunderstorm during the night. The rain had held off and spoiled sport hitherto ; now it set in and caused great trouble in movement.

On the morning of our start it dawned fairly clear, with only light, drizzling showers at intervals. An early start had been enjoined, and most of the kit had been made ready the previous evening ; but, as will sometimes happen with the best retainers, all my people seemed to have lost their senses this day, and seemed incapable of making a move. For my-

self, I possessed a store of books, and felt comfortable in a deck-chair after the hard work of the past few days. My mood also was that of the cynic. My men had been warned; *theirs* would be the punishment for a late start; I should keep my food with me, and, as we expected no regular shelters for several marches, could put up in any village we might approach about sundown.

We got off at 1 p.m. and very soon the rain set in earnestly. A long day's mud-crushing found me at nightfall, with a palm-leaf umbrella, a gunbearer, and the tiffin coolie, descending a wild and sodden hill-side to a tiny clearing surrounded by dripping jungle and resounding with the roar of swollen streams. A rice-field all under water, and a few scattered huts. Heavy mists hung low, the rain descended in solid streaks, and from the main valley, a mile away, came the booming of the flooded Matbóló. However, I was soon in the fairly dry verandah of a hut, with a fire drying my clothes, a snack from the tiffin basket, a cheroot, a bundle of rice-straw, and some light literature. At 11 p.m. despairing yells of the cook on the hill-side far above us! At 11.30 p.m. fried sausages, caviare toast, and stewed pineapples. Then more rice-straw, warm, dry bedding, mosquito-curtains; and, once again, just dropping off to sleep, the comforting feeling that oriental procrastination is receiving its just reward for once, and the maddening lethargy of the morning its compensation! During the next five days we made in all about twelve miles, during which time the tropical rain never ceased. Three days I lived in part of a dark hut six feet by nine, with hens laying eggs in my bed, a pile of rotten jungle fruit round the corner, retainers down with fever, cook silly with opium, bathing facilities *nil*, coolies bolted, and flooded out by rain. During lulls in the monsoon I sallied forth, one day covering twenty miles of magnificent country, lately tenanted by numbers of bison; but the cry was ever the same—they were not on the hills now, they had all gone to the salt-lick country! On the sixth day it dawned clear, with huge, scurrying clouds; and investigations began to bear fruit—there *was* a place fifteen

miles off, and luckily on our way, a place of many salt-licks! And thus it came to pass that the two last days spent in "Bison Land" are marked in letters of red.

It was a delightful morning when we set off on our journey to Sadda of the salt-licks. After the dismal experiences of a week of rain and mist the country unfolded its beauties afresh in the cheerful sun, with the singing of birds and a joyful hum of insect life. Huge fleecy clouds, impelled by a pleasant breeze, drove across the clear, blue, rain-washed sky, and chased purple shadows over a lovely prospect of rolling, green, jungly hills. The earth already yielded a spring-like growth of flowering plants, not as yet bound into the hampering tangle of September. Our own way had been chosen over the hills, while the impedimenta were to follow the path that wound through their valleys.

As we climbed the side of the Matbolo Valley, numerous perfectly fresh tracks of deer and other creatures crossed our way. My idea was to ascend the elevated plateaus that separated me from Sadda, and, according to the map, consisted of ground very similar to the heights of Gaurigosha—the route over the hills would be more pleasant than that leading along the low ground, and I hoped to find a second bison paradise for the dry months. A long climb at last found us on the highest portion of these strange bare-topped hills from which long, broad, flat spurs run out like fingers, but to every point of the compass. The entire country was now green. Here and there lay little mountain tarns—dry, of course, except during rain—and matted jungle crept into every ravine and cleft of the high ground. Setting the map, we spent some time in identifying the remote peaks that lay within sight—4,000, 5,000 feet in height, their heads capped with cloud. It was a magnificent prospect; and more, 'twas undoubtedly another Gaurigosha, for hundreds of old bison tracks covered the surrounding slopes and flats, and "Bison Hollows," even more seductive than those we already knew unfolded their verdant recesses all round. But the bison have gone down to Sadda, and so must we. With the aid of the

map, a most difficult country was negotiated without much unnecessary climbing, and evening found us dropping into the Sadda Valley—a picturesque locality, the village being situated in a large clearing, with some cultivation, in the midst of a shallow valley bounded by low woody hills. We reached it the following day. In almost every direction round this favoured spot lay the salt-licks—fifteen to twenty in all, I believe—now in full swing, and attracting more and more bison every day. Most of the licks are situated either in the nullahs or close to their banks. During the dry months they are quite dry and hard, but the first heavy rain saturates the soil and turns it to the consistency of puddled clay. The licks, which have doubtless been licked out through countless years of succeeding generations of bison, are generally surrounded by a quagmire of stamped clay, imprinted by thousands of hoof-marks—and the bison attack the more perpendicular sides, scooping out hollows with their greedy tongues and leaving the scorings of their teeth all along the banks. At this place I spent only three days, but saw enough to satisfy myself that it must be one of the most extraordinary bison grounds to be found anywhere. Every lick I visited had been absolutely overrun by the wild cattle, herds on herds of them ; and as yet this was but the beginning of the salt-lick season, and yet more animals would come ! And again, this was not the only salt-lick locality in those regions. Many others existed throughout this great natural preserve, and each had its droves of bison. At one place there is a forest bungalow just above a lick, where men have waked up in the morning, taken up their rifles, sat down in the verandah, in their pyjamas, and potted bison with their chota hazri ! And this not in the departed past of sporting India, but in our own time.

By this time having had my fill of bison shooting, I felt that the camera, not the rifle, was the weapon to use. It is hardly necessary, however, to state that no amount of shikar could, under the prevailing conditions of the country, have the slightest effect in thinning out the game. Those jungles

are guarded by more than man himself, as has already been indicated.

On the very last day of my stay in them I was tempted by the biggest bison I had hitherto seen. This was the bull already referred to in my comments on the question of "solitaries." On the previous day I had found him in the company of a younger bull, or "fag," and on the evening before that he was in possession of a herd of about fifteen cows. On both occasions he had given me the slip, as he had been apparently rendered shy by a shot I had fired at a panther at the other end of his own particular hill. To-day, however, was different. In making my way towards the big bull's hill I had found the absolutely fresh track of a tiger—he had been spending the night, no doubt, near the salt-licks—and, of course, had turned and followed this brute, expecting to find him at every turn, right up into the higher hills; but without success. On finally losing the tracks in impossible ground, it was late in the day; and I made for camp, merely skirting the crest of the favourite hill on my way back. Fresh bison tracks there were by the hundred, as usual; so usual in fact that I tramped carelessly along, rifle on shoulder. Suddenly, in a bit of bamboo jungle below me, I saw the burnt-sienna hind-quarters of an unusually great black bison, his tail flicking away as he slowly turned a corner of the canes. The men were close behind, so I ran back and motioned to them to sit down, while I returned to examine what I had seen. On regaining the edge of the slope I started back in surprise! Straight towards me, up the steep hill-side climbed slowly and majestically an enormous bull!

One glance at his head was enough. He was bigger than any I had seen. He came steadily up, diverging a little to his right towards my left hand, right in the open, about thirty yards away; and now beginning to pass behind the branches of a dead and fallen tree. I, too, was in the open. But not a look did the old bull vouchsafe me. He held on his way calmly, gravely, his great head bowing gently at every upward step. Perplexity sharpens precaution. I glanced about

THE BLIND BULL

uickly. Plenty of cover and trees close behind. I let him ass the dead branches, the little rifle was raised, and, at bout fifteen yards, aimed straight into his left ear.

Unreal as the figment of a stupefying dream the old bull opped dead, backed gradually like a monstrous locomotive, owly reared up, and subsided. Finger on trigger I watched m, for I do not trust head shots. But he lay there motion-ss save for a slow straightening out of his limbs. Then I histled up the men, and literally danced forward to examine ie prize.

Just as I reached the side of the inert mass it heaved wildly id struggled to its legs! The rifle flew to the shoulder. The ull went staggering off, faster and faster downhill, followed y three or four rapid shots, and then finally rolled over and ver and crashed down the slope till brought up in a slight ollow.

He was stone blind in the left eye.

In front of me as I write lies a curious paper-weight. It is hard-dried ball of reddish clay, which, I daresay, may some ay be analysed. It has no particular taste; which is range, for it is a piece of a Bison Land salt-lick, for the sake which thousands of the wild cattle jostle each other in at far-off land.

IX

AFTER TWENTY YEARS

THROUGHOUT my term of Indian service—particularly the latter half, when the jungle seemed very far away—I had promised myself that when the time came for retirement on pension I would, before going home to "settle down," spend at least a year in travel. I contemplated several extensive shikar trips—in my old haunts, as well as to other parts of the country that I had not had time or opportunity to visit. It was also my intention to work through Assam, and then via Manipur to the headwaters of the Chindwin, and so down-stream into Burma, a country I had always desired to see.

Thus, for many anticipatory years, notes had been compiled, information sought, and plans roughed out. I saw myself as then I should be—master of my own time, unfettered by leave restrictions, more experienced, and better off.

Moreover, I had long since made up my mind that nothing would tempt me to extend my Indian service over about fifty years of age. From observation of my seniors it was clear that, after that, even for the healthiest, tropical conditions did not make for that exceptional physical fitness essential to efficient Indian soldiering, but merely served to accelerate the qualifications for a bath-chair at some south coast watering-place. I did not intend to dote along after the dangled Indian *gájar* or carrot until I dropped conveniently in my tracks and off the pensions list; but, with a bit of luck, to eat my pension—and eat it with an appetite—for many a long day, a bad bargain for the pension paymaster.

And then—and then came 1914–18; four years out of India; the falling of some Indian scales from off the eyes and some other peculiar changes—all of which accelerated

the natural process of disillusionment that comes of long experience of the East, and greatly increased my desire to be quit of it. Thus 1921 found me in Kashmir, on leave, pending retirement; with a programme in which India had been largely supplanted by Africa.

It is a clear indication of their place in my heart that I should then decide to devote my abbreviated Indian itinerary to the central jungles, and cut out Southern India, Assam, Burma, etc.

It was arranged, therefore, to carry out a reconnaissance to my old haunts in order to see whether their old attraction still held. In case it did not, Africa, that now beckoned so insistently, should have the bulk of my available time. Besides that, the long-formed intention of leaving the East on completion of my fifth decade had become stronger than ever, owing to an unhappy feeling that a curious blight had fallen on the country, over and above the quite artificial display of "unrest" and other unconvincing poses.

Since my old jungle days the motor-car had arrived, and passed through a monstrously rapid development. One of the earlier enthusiasts, dating from 1907, various forms of the then really humorously-designated "self-propelled" vehicles had borne me, chugging and clanking, over many a long Indian journey. Even in those experimental days I had motored from the Northern Punjab down to Jubbulpore in the C.P., and thence back, and all along the North-West Frontier. It was therefore decided to combine with the shikar reconnaissance an extended family motor tour from Kashmir to Berar, and back by the United Provinces; all of which, a total of some 5,000 miles, was duly carried out, an extraordinarily interesting experience that included the revisiting of all the 'sights" of Northern India. The best way of doing that sort of tour would be as outlined on page 85 of this book; but we, a party of four, had to be content with one car, in which we also carried a servant, while an orderly with our heavier reserve baggage travelled by rail, meeting us at intervals.

And thus it was that, at our farthest southerly limit, a final

run from my birthplace across the Tapti and through a pass of the Satpuras, found us once again at Ellichpur!

That poor old place of ghosts and memories, then nearly twenty years derelict and decayed, affected the older of us poignantly; and, cutting short a saddening visit to the remains of our old home, the dreadfully altered Mess, and the ruins of the once beautiful Mall, we soon took the hill road to Chikalda, marvelling how we had survived those seven years in the enervating climate of the Ellichpur *terai*.

All through the familiar hill-country the driver would keep on pulling up, hopping out, gazing ecstatically around; and, if near some Korku wigwams, shouting for old jungle friends by name. Thus, Burhanpur was the first halt, where a yell across the nullah and loud references in the local vernacular to imaginary big big sambar soon brought the squat, black, grinning faces crowding round as of yore.

Kuddhi! Good heavens, he it is! I recognise him at once; now old and withered, but active and bright-eyed as ever. And Mhátín, Dádu, and one or two other nameless but familiar old snouts, still going strong!

All remember our old times together. Many inquiries pass and repass. The long, twenty-year-old threads are lifted a little. Then—"Are there still big stags in the old valley? Yes? Hooray! Then I am sure to come soon"—and the wide grins are made yet wider by a few rupees.

But my passengers are becoming impatient, and the foothills are hot for them. And so on, and up.

Gatang bungalow, perched high at the top of a stiff pull up a much belooped *ghát*. And the old khansamah? . . . Ah! No more, then, shall we taste his famous chicken curry.

And now that the cool of the hills is ours, and leisure to loiter by the way, the car may roll gently along the smooth but tortuous forest road as we drink in all the well-remembered surroundings, recollecting many a tedious all-day journey by this route in the peaceful bullock-tonga times. Days of old; of *bábá* and *áyáh*; and days yet older—of young people travelling for their first time in these hills.

IN 'EKKAS' TO BLACKBUCK COUNTRY

HIS FIRST BUCK

Presently, not far from the scene of our first tiger—twenty-x *days* ago it seems, not years—we halt for a leg-stretch, and fill of radiator-water ere tackling the last long climb to the nikalda plateau. There comes vividly to mind how, not any weeks previously, camped at over 12,000 feet in Kash-ir, I had scribbled, rather petulantly, some thoughts de-riptive of the difference between that silent and lifeless eauty and the jungle. The jungle . . . with its mystery of ick covert; its wonderful life; its many voices; its tunnels undergrowth; its fallen leaves, dried grass, rocks, unknown annies and secret rustlings and cracklings that may mean much, or so little, from the largest to the smallest, a great ag or a mongoose, a tiger or a tiny ground-squirrel. The ngle . . . . where the rifle is not swathed in its case and umped across some Kashmiri's back for days, or weeks, on d, but carried ever in one's own hand, ready for the xpected unexpected, for the sudden, fleeting chance, for at fraction of a second that means everything . . . in the ngle!

And here once more are we, in the heart of old accustomed ings; the warm, still air under the calm, unclouded blue; e persistent, zinging undertone of insect sound; the late ternoon sun dipped for us behind a lofty purple shoulder, it inflaming the rest of the rolling masses of dense forest glow bronze, green, yellow, brown, red; while we, in e deep blue trough of this bosky Amjhiri Valley, lift our es left to the black basalt-rimmed edge of the Móta ateau, right to the tightly-rolled woods that smother the asóndi ridges.

No Himalayan elevations here; only a modest three to ur thousand feet, but . . .!

The road runs doubling back and forth, contouring in and it of many a deep little Irish-bridged tributary nullah, and ere, where it rounds the nose of a spur, boasts a retaining wall basalt boulders, beyond which rises the low murmur of a runken, rock-bound stream. As we crane over, looking wn a steep fall of sapling stems, bamboos, trap rock, and

parched grass litter, ears become aware of a slight stirring and pattering. Awhile nothing can be seen, but presently the elusive shapes of a couple of spur-fowl, that strange little creeping, short-flighted *galloperdix*, show at intervals among the fallen leaves, where they move furtively with queer, low chucklings.

Flights of screaming parrakeets flash by, each bird a gleaming green arrow, all swiftly wheeling, turning in perfect drill suddenly perhaps to slant swooping upwards and settle in some red-fruited banyan.

From the trees that border the roadway comes an intermittent, soft low warbling whistling, the melodious "charming" of green-pigeon; and a quiet approach discloses a party of these lovely birds, always difficult to pick out except when they are clambering, as they now are, parrot-like, sidling and twining among the fruity branches overhead.

The air is fresh up here in this high-lying glen, full of a eucalyptus-like scent that rises from the dry, red-topped grasses through which a tiny footpath passes to plunge into an edge of dense jungle beyond a couple of aola-trees, their drooping branches heavy with pale-green fruit. But the voices of those whose thoughts are of our journey's end—and tea—bid us banish that utterly contented look and get busy with the starting-handle, so that we may move out of this "nasty, tigerish place" before the sun gets any lower. And, as the gears hum up into "top" and we steal quietly away, a barking deer is moved to set up his harsh "*aaow*!" from beyond the edge of the glade.

Extraordinary is the lack of effect of the motor-car on wild animals. One could think that its appearance and speed would cause instant and panicky flight. But that is not the case; the direct opposite is the rule; and, from my own few experiences, I judge that people whose opportunities have been greater must have some very interesting happenings to relate. Here, in these Melghat forests, I understand that a slow-moving car was once attacked by a couple of sloth-bears, and it is worth noting that the radiator-cap was the objective

those quarrelsome brutes, thus exemplifying their characristic attention to the heads of their victims!

The few jungle animals—*felidæ* and *cervidæ*—that I have et while motoring by day (and once four wolves in the open untry near Saugor) took practically no notice of the car ntil they winded or saw the occupants. In this way I drove within six paces of a leopard sunning himself on the roaday; and again, at dusk, surprised another that leapt on to low wall and crouched there, within about six feet of the ssing car.

After dark, powerful headlamps and a spot-light that can turned here and there will provide interesting entertainent along some forest road in a well-stocked jungle, animals eing located by their shining eyeballs that reflect the brilant light. But shooting under such circumstances is unfair, ost undesirable, and should be forbidden; as, to name only ne objection, a wounded animal cannot effectively be followed up.

While on the subject of artificial lights, it is obvious that hen the first practical electric lamps came into use they ere a great temptation to people who had spent many a uitless night over tiger and leopard kills and experienced ne bitterness of hearing the creature come and feed, or drag vay the bait, in the dark; and I daresay that, sometimes, rcumstances may alter cases. On the whole, however, the hics of sport are not well served by such scientific devices—though there can be no objection to their use for purposes observation only. As a matter of fact, a really effective nd portable lighting apparatus is not so easy a proposition it may seem; and dry batteries are, or were, especially the tropics, liable to fail when most wanted.

In the course of my own experiments, when I successfully volved the idea of a motor-bicycle electric head-lamp fixed my head, which combined a beam on the target with proper umination of both back- and fore-sight, and was worked a dry battery carried in a slung haversack, I fired (from achan or afoot) at four animals only—two tigers and two

black bears, at ranges varying from five to twenty-five yards. I missed the tigers, but got the bears.

There is no doubt of the efficacy of this head, or hat-trick. It is simple and easy to work, and solves the whole problem at one stroke. The beam of light follows the turnings of head and eyes. The switch I fixed at the right side of the head, on the " bandeau " that carried the lamp. Holding the rifle at the " present " with the left hand, the right snicked on the switch and then instantly dropped to its place on small of butt and trigger.

A small acetylene lamp can be used similarly ; ignition being effected by twirling a carborundum wheel ; it has its disadvantages—and certain advantages.

To generalise on the morality of such lights (*for carnivora only*) is a little difficult. It is doubtful if their use has any great effect on the " bag," while it certainly detracts from the value of a trophy so obtained, and is not, therefore, to be encouraged. No keen shikari would shoot systematically with such things.

Chikalda we found little changed, although its appearance had not been improved by allowing the exotic trees to become overgrown, or by some nasty little gaoli huts that had been established on one of the beautiful drives. The jungle was absolutely the same, except that in some parts lantana had obliterated old ways and formed new and dense cover.

We put up at the same bungalow as in 1895, and spent three delightful weeks in the old haunts, although not enjoying the facilities of yore, namely the old-type servants, one's own horses, old shikar gang, and full local touch. Besides —and I do not think it had anything to do with the Indian farce of non-co-operation which had by then penetrated even to such remote spots—everything seemed to have become slack and sleepy—inefficient to a degree that would never have been tolerated in the old days. The car was the saving of the situation : although the forwarding of petrol and oil from the nearest railway was extraordinarily dilatory. I

CHIKALDA REVISITED

as clear that the departure of the soldiers had resulted in a eplorable stagnation.

However, thorough knowledge of the country, the survival f a few of the old-time Korkus, and an independent means of ransport enabled one to get something done; while an old iend in Chikalda, and another, an Indian gentleman, in llichpur, put at my disposal what I should never have cquired otherwise—four or five young buffalo baits for tigers.

Serious shikar cannot be combined with family holidays, uld lang syne contemplations, and sketching; and thus only me ten working days were available. In that time, how-er, I had chances of getting a tiger, a sloth-bear, two panthers, nd two sambar. I missed the tiger and bear. One of the mbar heads measures forty-two inches; which makes it out my third longest, but not third best.

As a matter of fact I wanted, before leaving India finally, certain number of tiger, leopard, and bear skins; and in-nded, later on, to seek them in localities better than the elghat. Not that I desired to pile up trophies, but because, th the exception of those that I had sent home, I had lost actically my whole collection as a result of the War. Going home-leave early in 1914, the skins were treated and boxed r a six months' absence. So, nearly five years proved too uch for the insecticides used and gave *dermestes lardarius* long a run for his money; thus, when unboxing did take ace we found a fairly good collection of hides, but "nary" a ir—the place of the latter having been taken by a portentous ass of the remains of many generations of "woolly bear." e bases of my best bison horns, too, were completely con-med by these insects. The only thing I know that will eguard skins and horns absolutely and indefinitely—horn only agglutinised hair—is arsenical soap beaten up in water the consistency of cream and thickly applied all over h a brush.

Information and reconnaissance occupied my first few days, d long jungle tramps and climbs in familiar ground soon got into fettle, and, reference being made to the old diaries,

flattered one that in some ways fifty-one might be an improve ment on twenty-five! After that, the radius of action wa extended by means of petrol to a degree undreamed of in th past. The Melghat is well furnished with unmetalled fore roads in addition to the main Public Works thoroughfares and the only trouble was the number of abrupt hair-pin bend at steep corners, round which even a handy car had to b manœuvred back and forward with extreme care.

The forest roads with their soft soil surface make for ver silent motoring, and, one morning, gliding down towards th Sípna Valley, I overtook the local post, on its way to Sémadha —the ancient, time-honoured way of the East; the *chink chink!* of the little sleigh-like post-bells synchronising wit each slow-trotting, knee-bent pace; the brass-wired *láthi*, o quarterstaves, and the two men jogging their passive, som nolent way—two of them, mark you, because of the bears- and bhoots!

The car had arrived within some ten yards of the totall unconscious postmen when a diabolical idea entered my min —born, possibly, of the white man's impatience of orienta "sleepy-sickness," "karma-meditation," and all that sort o thing.

On my car was a particularly vile extra warning devic that I had installed to deal with the sleepy Indian bullock cart nuisance; a thing like a brass-bound coffee-mill. Yo ground the handle, and, according to the manner of grindin it emitted a variety of unpleasing sounds ranging from a lov dry grunt to a frightful, ravening shriek.

It was that still and breathless time shortly after dawn and the road twisted its steep descent along the gloomy sid of a spur, through a solemn forest of tall-stemmed teak. No a sound broke the sizzling cicada silence, for we were "coas ing" down, with engine switched off, and the wheel-track were deep in powdery dust.

At five yards I applied the brakes, set my teeth, *and groun like blazes!*

The effect was wonderful.

MELGHAT FINGLES—COLD WEATHER

H.M.'s Posts spontaneously, automatically, and as one man, ere many feet in air; but, on return to terra firma, they nctioned in quite different ways. One official, back turned, nds to ears, cowered low—"less than the dust"! The her whipped about with a shrill yell and glaring eyeballs, nd his long lathi fairly hummed as he swept it furiously round nd round his head!

Which showed that there are different kinds of postmen: nd reminded me vividly that we were within a mile or so of ne scene of a somewhat similar occurrence a quarter of a entury before.

Failure to get a tiger kill within a convenient distance, mbined with a temporary petrol-famine, constrained me to lan a few days' outing to Bhawai, a favourite old resort of ine on the upper Sipna. Transport difficulties—in this case oolies—of course supervened; but were overcome, and, avelling very light, without tent or bedstead, we tramped off y short cuts to the Masondi ridge, changed coolies, and arted for the long descent towards the Sipna basin. The orthward view from the top here, the Dhaura *ghát*, is very ne. Sheer headlands of black, buttressed basalt project oldly from the wooded ridgeway, and below them long, steep ants of dense dryish forest, gashed by innumerable lesser avines, run down 1,500 feet to the deep-cut Sirisban nullah, Ánkia Ám. Beyond that rises a lower ridge, the end of a our off Chóndo, and behind that again lies a great basin where aura and Sipna meet. Bhawai is near their junction. And ne whole broad amphitheatre is enclosed and dominated by ne flat-topped bulks that run round from Mákla, eight miles the north, towards Khámla eastward.

Under the opaque blue immensity of sky the hills that glow rownish-yellow nearer at hand, with the occasional green of on-deciduous trees, recede to a distant pinkish-mauve. The reat shadows that fall across their gullies and recesses are of intense purple hue, or, where evergreen jungle clothes the oister plateau-edges or follows the windings of streams, of

an astonishing blue. It is mid-February, and the afternoo sun strikes down fiercely on the desiccated grass and tinder leafage.

Sitting in an English garden on a summer's day, turnin over old colour-sketches, it is the striking difference of scene the powerful hue-contrasts, the brilliant lighting, and grea distances without much atmosphere, that impress mind an memory and carry them back to those splendid wilds.

As the caravan approaches I rise and take the old pat that twenty-five years have not effaced from recollection but am arrested by a cluck from behind. It is closed, thes many years past, by *raimúnia*, that accursed lantana, and w must go another way ; in fact, our best way now is round about, by Jawár Kúnd. Disappointing ; for I had looke forward to a peep, *en route*, into Andhárban, that impressiv little " dark jungle " on the north side of the Ánkia Ám.

Bhawai's appearance is altered by a growth of young teak so that I hardly recognise it. I had intended to put up i the Taura forest hut, a mile or so away ; but, as it is reporte that there is no bedstead there—a simple matter of four leg and a framework criss-crossed with webbing or string— stayed where I was, and had a clearing swept, under th vertical columns of a nice shady banyan, where, with cam table, chair, valise, canvas tub and basin, I was soon comfort able. My valise was set on a long, wide, and deep substratu of dry grass, proof against creepy-crawlies of the biting o stinging sort ; while the columnar pendent roots of the banya afforded handy hanging places for other kit.

My young Punjabi orderly, whose first jungle experience thi is, proves himself a handy man ; and my servant, a Kashmi who has accompanied us on our long motor tour from his ow country, is busy in his " kitchen " on the opposite side of th tree. He is not very happy, so far from his home, and h drooping nostalgia is not lessened at the sight of this appa ently interminable jungle, which his imagination peoples wit legions of noxious creatures. He reiterates a mournful hea shaking pronouncement of " Big jungle, very big jungle !

A JUNGLE BIVOUAC

ıd to my expressed hope of " plenty tigers " essays an uncom-
rtable smile.

Our first care is to enlist the sympathies of the local Korkus,
ıd re-establish friendly relations ; then, after tea, we sally
rth to look round and see at least one of our tiger-baits
ed up. Night falls as we return to the bivouac. A glori-
ısly hot tub, a good dinner, a long cheroot or two, a scribble
the jungle diary, the joy of reading a really good map, and
e are very ready for bed, although we have covered only
ghteen miles to-day.

And, lying there in the delicious cool, looking up through
ıe dark banyan leafage to the tropical star-glitter, hearing
ıe curious jungle sounds and silences once more, life seems
ery good. Fourteen years since we have enjoyed *any* kind
jungle ! Years that, largely, the locust seems to have
ıten. Khybers ! Mespots ! Barren rocks and arid sands
typical Islam. Smelly, moth-eaten camels and " sheeks."
passing shrug . . . a wave of the hand . . . they are gone. . . .
And, far away, somewhere below Makla's woody heights,
hoes the intriguing sound of a sambar's bell.

The earliest streak of the false-dawn is the time to be off
ı a forest prowl ; but not if one is tying up more than one
ait, for then the report-centre must be held until all in-
rmation is in. Time was precious, so, although it risked
sing a bait for nothing, I had three tied out nightly : one
o the left bank of Sipna at a spot that I knew well ; one near
ıe Taura-Sipna junction ; and the third so as to cover the
ndharban.

The latter is a remarkable place, a quarter-mile south-west
the twenty-first milestone on the main Ellichpur-Semadhau
ad ; a small, secret sunken, level-bottomed pocket, its soft,
oist stream-bed shrouded and shadowed by gloomy mangoes
ıd other large trees, damp and cool always, and, if not
ıfailingly holding water, within easy reach of perennial pools
the adjoining Ankia Am. Turning at right angles to its
ief south-westerly course, this secluded little nullah finds

its way down a precipitous fall to the main ravine ; and close to the bend is a quiet little cup of grass and saplings, well-beloved of tigers. Twice have I kicked them up there, like out-lying rabbits.

In the length and breadth of the Melghat I know of no more suggestively fascinating a holt than this—but one cannot expect it or any other covert to hold tigers invariably.

" Gára húa ! " (a kill has occurred) is one of the pleasantest announcements that a shikari can receive as he sits ready in the early sunlight with cigarette and cup of tea—and forth with all is bustle and anticipation. Khíla-páta was the lucky spot, where the eastward Sipna Valley path crosses a side nullah—one very pleasantly imprinted on memory—and the *gára*-scout, not an experienced person, we fear, reports that he saw a " big tiger " leave the neighbourhood of the kill and go off in the direction of the river.

Personal reconnaissance revealed no track of any feline, but the appearance of the victim and other details suggested that the work was that of a large panther ; and, as there was no other kill this day, we spent some time in getting my machan —a netting affair, described on page 221, and still perfectly good after all these years—into proper position in the selected tree. I then returned to camp, and, at the suggestion of some of my old Makla friends who had come to see me, went off to have a " general beat " some miles away.

About four that afternoon I was back again, settled in my spider's web, facing east. My tree overhung a dry, stony grey nullah-bed, some seven paces wide, that came down towards and below me from an abrupt bend forty yards away half-right ; and on that side was hemmed in by a high bank topped by a yellow, grassy, sapling-studded flat. The other bank, in front of me, was low, and rose slightly to a rough open space of short withered grass about the size of a tennis lawn. This was Khila-pata ; and along its edge to my left, running east and west and crossing the nullah behind me was the Bhawai-Khamla path. Scattered saplings grew every

GÁRA HUA!

SHIKÁR HUA!

where and merged into the denser growth of forest that stood a little back from the vicinity of the stream, the tall and mostly leafless trees of which shut off most of the view; but up the vista of the little side-glen stood old Chondo's jungly heights, two or three miles away, looming large in the calm sky.

The kill lay rather in the open to my left front, across the watercourse. And from a height of nearly twenty feet my perch commanded the whole glade.

What remained of an eighteen-month-old buffalo bull-calf was still attached by the foot and a piece of rope to a strong root; and it was this fact, the size of the fang and claw marks, and the amount of flesh consumed that, in spite of Kálu's asseverations, made me sceptical of tiger and inclined to panther. Further, it seemed unnatural that the feline, whatever it might be, should have gone northward to the Sipna, for there was far better cover, and water, too, up this side nullah to my right—on which point memory was very clear indeed, a tigress had proved it; and the scene of that occurrence lay not two hundred yards from where I now sat. That conjured up vivid recollections. How early that afternoon she had returned to her kill. The magnificent sight of her creeping up through the tangle, and then walking slowly forward to stand over her prey, not eight paces distant. The deadly fire of the ·400. Her spasmodic turn and fifty-yard death-gallop straight away downhill, ending in the sudden upfling of a thick tail and heels-over-head collapse.

And what fortune was to be mine to-night?

Luck or no luck, I intended to make a night of it, although there would be no moon. My net was most comfortable. Food and water at my side. And, if specially required, there was my "cyclops," that electric eye for my forehead, now slung from a convenient bough.

On such night-watches my experience is that, far from hanging heavy, time races; that these long vigils, with never an eye-shut, are remarkable for the unexpected rapidity with which they pass.

The last hour or so before dawn is usually uneventful, for then the tide of nature is at its lowest ebb. But even to this there can be startling exceptions.

My men had returned to Bhawai, about two miles away. They would come for me soon after dawn.

Khila-pata ! The Glade of the Stake ! For that seemed to me the gist of the hesitating tale that I had heard an old Korku mumble over the camp fire—of some horrid thing, half-human, like the *churél*, or the vampire ; a devil-possessed creature that had long ago been dragged to this spot, and, for the peace and safety of decent dwellers in this forest, pegged to earth, and then staked, with a great *khíla* driven through its foul breast . . . a jungle Dracula !

Well, the redoubtable Count himself would find a spotlight and a ·350 magnum a tough proposition !

A great peace brooded over all, and in my heart, as the late afternoon turned to evening and purple shadows crept ever longer. Every sense responded to the charm of the simple scene, and thought chased thought as I sat in utter disregard of time, in the quietude of that lofty hiding-place, and watched, heard, smelled, and sensed the ever-impressive close of the jungle day. Greatcoat, rug, and khaki-covered pillow contributed to comfort and unfettered watchfulness. Rifle, night-glass, water-bottle, and haversack all in place. And view comprehensive.

For some little time I had seemed to be aware of a faint, indefinite throbbing sound for which I could not account. It had ceased : might have been caused by the flight of a whirring bevy of the noisy bush-quail.

Suddenly a nearer and louder access of it had me on the alert at once. A soft, deep purring that I had not heard for years—and then seldom. My glasses were up, and I was staring at the top of that yellow grass-flat to my right and from which the sound seemed to come—when four spotted paws rose lazily and waved about in air ! A leopard rolling about on his back, and purring the while !

The faint tiger hopes that I had cherished grew very faint indeed, and I cursed my luck. Hungry leopards do not exhibit signs of well-being and contentment; nor do they turn up near other people's kills by accident. No. A good deal of my late buffalo must be inside that well-lined belly.

And when had he put it there? After a tiger had killed, fed, and gone? After driving a young and timorous tiger off? Or had it been entirely his own affair? I had watched the triangular game of kill, tiger, and leopard before. A slight hope resurged.

It is possible that the fact of my watching that panther *without hostile intent* may have accounted for his extraordinary confidence. Not even from a hole in the ground, a rifle-pit, had I seen so artless and continued a display by one of that wily tribe. For a long time he rolled, purred, sat about on the high ground. Then he strolled casually to the edge of the bank, looked about, chose his easiest way, and came slowly down, ten yards below me, and stood in the dry nullah, looking towards the kill.

Presently he turned and padded lazily away up the stream-bed, disappeared round the bend, reappeared, turned once more in the direction of the carrion, and disposed his limbs elegantly on a flat rock. When walking he was not nearly so elegant; for he was a heavy and very hollow-backed brute, with pendulous belly and chunky limbs, and I put him down as a very old male.

Before long he was on the move again, wandering gradually nearer to the buffalo remains, and had seated himself within a few feet of them—when I noticed a movement on the Khámla path!

Confusion! A Korku and Korkúni, the pair hastening westward at their best pace, making for home ere darkness should fall! One could see the quickly-averted side-glance at the ill-omened Khila-pata, and note the short, frightened little run of the young girl to close up immediately behind her half-trotting lord.

Of panther and shikari they were supremely unconscious.

I glanced quickly at Spots. To him the approaching figures were at first invisible, but his sharp ears soon apprised him of their presence. He elongated his neck a moment, prick-eared; then down like lightning, and in a crouching run sought the cover of the nullah and along it to the bend —where he halted with back-turned head. . . .

The light thuddings of the hastening bare feet soon die away. He straightens up again. Once more the graceful pose on the same rock; again the leisurely evening constitutional. And now he is up to, bending over, and nosing the carcase, the putrescent shapelessness.

My last hope died away. If this was not the panther's own kill it was his meat last night. A tiger that meant to return would have snapped that rope and taken away the remains to concealment. That proprietorial attitude is unmistakable . . . And forthwith my thoughts turn elsewhere, to Andhárban. Will it be "Gara hua" the morrow morn? Will the Melghat vouchsafe just one more to her old devotee?

And this surfeited old spotted thief; shall I plug him now? Or wait a little longer? Korkus are more truthful than the mixed Aryan native, and little Kalu was very insistent that he had seen stripes, not spots. Yet here is this hollow-backed Old Tom so gorged that he is in no hurry for more! Shall I wait events . . . no moon . . . fire just one shot . . . eliminate leopard . . . bird in hand . . . and take the unlikely chance of other developments later?

That decides me. My "intentions" become "hostile." I reach gently for the ·350. Old Tom is in the nullah again, not twenty yards away, broadside on. . . .

Simultaneously with the explosion the spotted body is high in air, back arched, all "tucked up." No hollow back now! He must have made an instant, startled, vertical spring; and now falls heavily among the stones, where he struggles a moment, then picks himself up and rushes confusedly for the bank by which he originally arrived. *Bang!* and he rolls back with a belching grunt. With convulsive gyrations and

flounderings that afford no further aim he reaches the bend, whirls round it, and I hear a loud crashing of dry leaves that suddenly ceases.

Worried (as I nearly always used to feel) at the disturbance created in so secluded a spot, I sit there feeling that, after all, I seem to have done the wrong thing. It is "in my bones" that the panther lies dead just round the corner; but a culprit sensation that I am now found out has resulted from those two shattering detonations—echoes that have roared through the peaceful woods, and been bellowed back and forth, it would seem, through the whole blessed Melghat. Yet one has reasons to know that a distant gunshot or two do not disturb wild animals nearly so much as man's smelliness—shoutings—fires—cookings—and general unrest.

It could not have been more than about twenty minutes later that I heard peculiar sounds from my left and rear: a series of half a dozen quick, high-pitched, querulous, staccato notes in descending chromatic scale, and interrogative in character, a sort of—"Ha, ha, ha, ha, ha, what, have, we, here?"—and I knew that a hyæna, one of those slouching, striped, carrion-scenters, was about to arrive on the scene.

Approaching with meticulous hesitation in the late half-light, and repeating his tentative remarks at intervals, the foul brute, his hair on end, smelled at the kill an instant, but evinced vastly more interest in the palpable scent of the panther. Easily, but with immense caution, the uncouth grey monster, all head and shoulders, miserably-drooping hind-quarters, and pale, bottle-brush tail, roaded it up, and, reaching the place where Spots had fallen in the nullah, halted and set up a queer, frightened cackle. Finally, he, too, proceeded, with many amusing misgivings, to the bend of the watercourse; and I knew that very soon we should have expert advice as to the whereabouts of the spotted one.

The hyæna reached the corner, hesitated a moment, then, with his tail-hairs all wide with fearful inquisitiveness, disappeared round it.

Next moment a frightful hullabaloo rent the still air! Stifled shrieks, hoots, snappings, and cacklings mingled with hellish laughter and loud leaf-crashings, and the terrified bone-cracker came bundling back, passed at his shambling lollop under my tree, crackled the dry jungle a little, and was gone.

The night was uneventful. When it was light enough we went to the bend; and it was a sharp object-lesson to find that, in that bed of large, reddish-yellow taklai leaves the now stiff spotted coat was quite invisible until we were within four or five paces of it.

Diana of Bhawai was not kind; and a day or two later I climbed back to Chikalda, tigerless, investigating the wild khoras up to Béjmahál, and so home. Late in the evening I was plodding up the last long north-and-south ravine that separates most of "bungalow" Chikalda from the lower plateaus and the native bazár, when a piece of luck came my way.

There are many native legends and superstitions about the *kólha-bálu*, which is represented as a mangy, half-blind old jackal (*kólha*) that precedes tigers and leopards, guiding them to their prey, warning them of hidden dangers, and shielding them from harm. I imagined that I had seen one of these familiars many years before, hanging about a jungle road, to which my attention had been attracted by its peculiar, uncanny ululation. But here was the real thing at last, and no mistake.

As I breasted the last steep zigzag from ravine to plateau, a distant cry came to my ears and I looked across a deep gully to a ridge some five hundred yards away eastward.

On its open crest some small objects were in unusual movement, and, lifting my glasses, I saw two or three jackals scuttling here and there in strange, excited fashion. I could hear their short, sharp barks now and then, while at intervals one of them would halt and repeat a cry that I had never associated with his kind. Its duration was slightly more

THE REAL KÓLHA BALÚ

than one second; its compass about an octave up and back again:

"Bă-ōōōō-ăh!"

As I gazed, the head, back, and loins of a large panther were seen, undulating along behind the rise, and presently he emerged handsomely in full view, strolling unconcernedly along in a direction that would take him towards the back of the bazar huts, now half a mile away.

The jacks appeared to be fascinated; and continually scampered all round and about him, now darting away, now sneaking up behind, sometimes even capering—warily—in front.

Spots held steadily on his way, taking not the slightest notice of their vulgar propaganda. There was no chance of my getting round before dark; and presently all disappeared from sight.

The moment I heard the cry I recognised it as one that I had often heard by night in places where one would expect to find felines; but until then had been under the impression that it was one of the vocal efforts of the striped hyæna. The cry I have tried to phrase might also be expressed, but not so exactly, by "Balú-ah!" showing that the native name is substantially correct. But, the a's are short, not long.

When we motored regretfully away from the Satpuras I thought that I had taken final leave of them; but nearly a year later, on the eve of leaving India for good and all, I returned to Berar for a fortnight. That was due to the fact that my dissatisfaction with things Indian had increased to such an extent that the long-planned trips to little-known but highly reputed parts of the country east and south of the C.P. were abandoned in favour of Africa, and that, after seeing my family off to England, I had to kill time until the departure of the next steamer for Mombása. My oldest haunts were, under the circumstances, the most accessible, and, in my frame of mind, the most desirable: for, in spite of the fact that I was longing to kick the Indian dust off my shoes for ever, they served to remind me that, whatever it might be

now, India had for me many old ties of gratitude and affection.

Part of those very last jungle days is described in the concluding chapter of this book, but does not include an episode which is in my limited experience, remarkable—in that before or since I have neither read nor heard of the like.

I was camped in the valley below Gawalgarh, working along the base of the hills, and, having done a considerable tramp, was far up the old Chandrabhaga when an urgent messenger managed to find me with news of a holocaust of cows near Chínchkhéra, a *jágir*, or privately-owned village and lands, the property of descendants of the *Killadár* or commander of Gawalgarh in Wellington's day. The village lies at the southern foot of Bairát and to get there meant that I had to retrace my long way out of the higher hills via my camp, and work round into them again, three parts of a circle and a distance of some twelve miles.

It was dusk before I reached the gaoli village, where I was to pick up a guide to the scene of the tragedy ; but I intended to see what could be done with the aid of the " cyclops," and we set off into a moonless night, other two men carrying the few things I needed.

Following a rough path, we walked for forty minutes up the big Jámgarh ravine. Three cows had been killed that morning out of a herd, in broad daylight ; two of them by the tiger or tigers, while in the scattering panic a third had fallen over the steep bank of the stream and broken its neck. The last, 'twas said, had been removed by *chamárs*, or leather-workers, low-caste men who skin and eat such windfalls but the other kills were there. The first we found in the open nullah-bed, and it lay uneaten ; but the second had gone from the place where the cowherd had last seen it lying. . .

The " cyclops," with its 6–8 volt bulb, was functioning well. There being no shikaris or trackers with me, and Abbas being away at the time, I had to do all the tracking myself ; and after a long search in vain was contemplating giving it up for the night, when, at last I found a blood-smear on a rock

Thereafter all went satisfactorily; and with that wonderful light on my forehead we followed the drag for about two hundred yards, through jungle, up round a spur, and into a tributary gully that drained a small hollow. Here, at one point, the tiger had lifted the cow straight up an overhanging rock-ledge about seven feet high! Above this we found the paunch of the victim, and, a short way farther on, the rest of the carcase—less a considerable part of the hindquarters.

The whole proceedings, ever since I had received the news, had been a race against time; but now I sat down, and, while the machan was being prepared, swallowed a hasty meal.

Not liking to risk putting the tiger off by moving the kill towards a better tree I had to discontent myself with a miserable taklai that jutted from the slope overhanging the hollow; and among its bare, smooth, soft branches the net machan was adjusted. Hurry and a certain amount of fatigue made me careless to accept this perch, in which, on the side nearest the slope, I was not more than eight or nine feet above ground, and most inadequately concealed.

My haste was due to the fact that the tiger had apparently left the kill only as we approached, and I hoped therefore that he would be close by and return to his interrupted meal as soon as the men had departed.

The latter now went off to Jámbli, a mile and a half distant; and, having previously tested my light-ray, I was settled for the night at about nine.

It was a noisy jungle, thick with fallen leaves; but I did not realise that the little spur on which my tree grew afforded a silent approach to my right hand as I sat facing the kill in the hollow below. The cow's head lay pointing "upstream," and as felines always drag their prey head first, this could be taken as a fair indication of the direction of the tiger's meditated retreat—and therefore the way by which he was likely to return. Also, we had approached *up* the little dell.

To abbreviate my tale and get to its *dénouement*—the night was uninteresting, and after a long and strenuous day I found the greatest difficulty in preventing my head from falling

forward. The waning moon had risen about midnight, and faintly illumined the looming mass of Bairat and its buttressing heights that dominated the northerly skyline. The night became very cold, and I longed for something to supplement my overcoat; while my hunger was not decreased by the memory that it was more than twenty-four hours since I had had a square meal.

Very, very slowly the hours wore away to that deathly time just before the earliest indications of coming day, the time which my jungle experience had almost without exception found bleak, blank, and barren; and at last came that indefinite hyalescence, high near the zenith, that first faint paling of the stars and gentle stirring of air that begin to hint at the birth of the false-dawn. I reached slowly for the haversack, and, finding the remains of some cold meat, placed for silence' sake in aluminium tumbler, began a cautious, chilly, chota hazri. Some soft ginger biscuits followed; and after that a stealthy uncorking and tipping up of the water-bottle.

It was a little lighter now, but moonlight still just held its wan sway. A craving for tobacco, denied these many hours past, increased, insisted, became importunate. Ultra-prudence counselled a final patience, at least until the false-dawn . . . but the flesh now scouted the idea of the twice-disturbed tiger's return . . . and flesh won.

My head re-emerged from the greatcoat folds that had smothered a momentary flicker of flame. The end of a long Madras cheroot glowed dully. The comforting smoke rose high and floated away in a safe direction. Legs stretched a little. Thoughts turned campward—to a large and satisfying breakfast; to a fine long nap. . . .

"WHOOOAAAI-YÚGH! . . . WHOOOAAAI-YÚGH! . . . WHOOOAAAI-YÚGH!"

A gigantic sound filled the air to my right, increasing in volume as it rushed toward me, stopped about ten yards away, continued there awhile, turned off yet more to my right and there maintained its bellowings, but not quite so terribly. . .

Rifle and light had been placed ready for action towards the kill, to my left front, but nevertheless seemed instantly to be in my hands and on my head as I started up in my now unsteady perch, and added a loud deterrent shouting to the ghastly din. Immediately a long, dark, sinuous back was seen slowing through the grass and tangle half-right. It stopped. I blazed into it. A loud snarl and a rush. A quick crackling of sticks and leaves downhill and away. Then a heavy crashing down by the main nullah.

As I crouched there, listening, ears acutely attuned, mouth half-opened, the sustaining grip of urgent tension began to relax . . . gave way . . . the cold . . . the sudden nervous shock . . . powerful reagents both . . . and forthwith, and for a full minute, my teeth were chattering like castanets until, in sheer mortification, both fists went to jaw.

Amidst all, one had been aware of the distant screaming of scandalised peacocks, as the reverberations of that hellish combined clamour rolled through the startled forest. 'Twas heard in far Chinchkhera!

In the jungle diary I find the following:

"What ailed that brute last night?—and what infernal cheek!

"Tigers policing their kills may growl warningly; may come out with a 'whoof!' to disperse vultures or other interlopers; may be noisy when worried in a beat; or when wounded; nursing tigresses may demonstrate fiercely if disturbed. Such things I have known, and understand. But for a silent, close approach, followed by that deliberate, bellowing right-charge I find no precedent. Of course it was connected with the kill, prompted by chagrin, malevolence?

"Did the brute take the glow of my cheroot for the eye of some other beast of prey?

"Did he know a man was there?

"Some inherited fear of the matchlock and its smouldering firestock?

"Had he been allowed to come to arrogant ways, findin it easy to drive off humans?

"Had he been previously fired at in beat or over kill . . Ah! I seem to have heard that a tiger had been shot at nea Bairat some months ago. . . ."

"What I want to know is the reason for so extraordinaril prolonged a demonstration; for, with all its ferocity, th attack checked, failed, turned aside at the last ten paces."

"As to the effect on myself, I have no illusions. Neithe has he who, stunned, half-buried by the monstrou 'crrrrrrump!' of a 12-inch H.E. shell, wilts under the renc ing shriek of the next imminent arrival."

Since then, and before, have I listened to the night voic of the African lion, at a distance of a hundred yards or so but even that seemed a little thing compared to those immens deep, vomiting roars, each followed by its convulsive, breath sucking "YÚGHH!" (WHO . . . *ARE* . . . YOU?)—th enormous fear, hate, and strength that burst from tha great brassy throat like the blaring of a thousand trombone and were hurled into one's face out of the pre-dawn peace.

X

VARIOUS MUSINGS

VARIOUS references to the ethics of shikar have already found a place in these pages, led up to by incident or accident; but the subject is rather a large one, and ntroversial.

Youth usually has a different outlook than age on these atters. Prejudice and ignorance also have their usual nfusing effect. I do not think that one is entitled to moralise the subject until able to look at it from more than one int of view, after considerable experience, during which one ll certainly have had to sing *peccavi* more than once; and t even then unless capable and desirous of drawing fair and personal conclusions.

Eager and careless youth may be responsible for actions at age has learned to avoid—or grown tired of. This latter more particularly the case when sport is looked on merely as form of achievement or when the acquisition of "trophies" the chief inducement—when the curio-hunter, completing his llection or moving on to fresh fields of conquest, is able to y that he has been to such and such a part of the world d got "his" so and so.

It is a subject that does not permit of generalisation. That nting must make a man into a mere butcher is no more a ct than that brutal sinfulness is the inevitable outcome of e animal side of man's nature. It is a matter of ethics, education, of principle. Nor can hard-and-fast rules be d down on the subject. For instance, from an ultra-mane point of view there is no difference between the ooting of an Indian tiger and an Indian lion; ethically, wever, the difference is great, the latter animal being very

rare and in danger of becoming extinct. Humanely, there no difference between the taking of animal life at present British East Africa and the taking of it in the past in Sou Africa; but ethically there is no comparison. In the form case, owing to sportsmanlike behaviour and a proper system control, animals have been protected, while in the latter th have been ruthlessly exterminated.

Again, there are differing ideas as to what constitutes spor The trophy-collector takes little pleasure in hunting a animal unless it is rare or its horns, etc., of phenomenal siz He is not really a hunter. And he will criticise the man wh hunts and continues to hunt for the sheer love of it.

Others there are who, in their ignorance and their zeal collect "records," strike at the root of stock by removir only the finest males and bringing about a preponderan of females attended by immature males. This evil is ver difficult to prevent; every sportsman wants to get as goo a specimen as possible, none wishes to shoot females, yet, i the case of certain animals, it is necessary to restore the balan that the sportsman has upset by killing off at least one two old females for each male bagged. It is a matter circumstances, and most necessary where animals are easil got at.

This etiquette of making the killing of females *taboo* dat from very far back, and has become too inelastic. Why, als should this and the protection of close seasons be restricte practically to the *ungulates* at the expense of the *felidæ* an *ursidæ*? Are the latter splendid creatures not equally d serving of fair play? As to the difficulty in some cases distinguishing their sex, a fine under the game ordinan would sharpen observation in the same way as the fine f shooting small ivory.

And such observations remind one of the archaic metho of estimating the "record" value of certain horned animal Take the Indian bison and the African buffalo, for instanc where "spread" is the first if not the sole considerati "Spread" is almost entirely dependent on accident, i.e. th

set " of the horns, the angle at which they spring from the ull. It would seem more logical to place first the length id thickness of horn and the weight of cleaned and fully ied skull with horns complete, thereafter considering shape id symmetry.

A good deal of unnecessary shooting of certain animals ay be due to the fact that they happen to be unusually fficult to get the better of, and so, when after much disap- intment and vexation the opportunity comes it may be used.

I have read some very good arguments against certain alpractices in hunting, cogently urging the revision or form of sportsman's etiquette in matters such as pursuing nted deer into the Bristol Channel, coursing hares heavy th young, etc. And there is no doubt that unnecessary uelty can arise in big-game hunting, when, from in- mpetence, callousness, or—rarely—unavoidable circum- ances, wounded animals are not followed up with sufficient ergy and put out of pain. Shooting at hippos from passing ats, or at game from passing trains are instances of wanton d unchecked brutality.

I have also read some very ill-informed generalisations by ople whose statements show that they write at random, thout any knowledge at all.

The fact is that it is not an affair of logic. Sportsmen knowledge that they cannot preach the higher humanity ; t ranting humanitarians conveniently forget how they get me of their food, warm clothing, and shoe-leather, or what is tailed by their drinking of milk.

Tiger-shooting off elephants (which are more often than not cadged " from native potentates), may be the only way of aling with the giant grass-coverts of the Terai, etc., and ovide very jolly, sociable parties, but cannot be compared true value with lone-hand shikar, with the subaltern's well- rned prize. Any fat, breathless man can shoot a tiger off phant-back if he happens to hold his gun straight. The l performers here are the people who trained the elephants

and personally directed the locating and driving of the tige
" All 'untin' is good ; but some is better nor others," a matt
of personal predilection ; some prefer the quiet working
hedgerows and rough with a clever spaniel, or stealing alo
the wood's edge at evening with a rabbit-rifle, to a big rise
the most cleverly-managed pheasants.

As to the ethics of using a motor-car in connection wit
sport, I have little to add to the remarks already made excep
that the vast majority of those who take an unfair advantag
by artificial means well know what they are doing. On th
other hand, it is amusing to hear people who enjoy specia
advantages for shikar, or those who cadge or command th
use of elephants, inveighing against, say, the use of a For
car ; for, when it comes to comparisons, the Ford might in
way be described as the other man's rather inferior elephan
And I do not remember ever having heard the use of an elephan
dubbed unfair.

One of my strongest objections to the car in India is that th
saddle seems to be going out of use in favour of lolling over
steering-wheel, very much on the same principle that elephan
back is easier business than Shanks's mare.

Such discussions lead naturally to the subject of shika
jealousies ; and these principally group round the old vexe
question of selfish officials and exasperated others, or obligin
officials and badly-behaved others—for undeniably there a
faults on both sides.

Enough has been said in the Press and elsewhere for yea
past to show that the old evils still obtain. Having take
the trouble to collect some other people's views on the subjec
over many years, I possess, somewhere, a file of unpleasan
cases, apart from my own experiences, some of which
indicated, about twenty-five years ago, in the pseudonymou
letters of one " Jhoot Singh." Some of the malpractice
of which I have read would be hooted if indulged in durin
a game.

The worst instance of which I have personal cognisance wa
when the head civil official of a district, after accusing n

of irregularities, refused to explain his reasons or go into the matter with a view to clearing it up, satisfied, apparently, that a local busybody should attack me anonymously in a sporting paper, with a pen well dipped in gall, and, referring to a humble little shikar-book of my "twenties," tax me with all the sins he could think of, including that of "posing as an authority on sport."

As a matter of fact, I had had my eye on that country for many years, and, in collecting information about it—some of which is too strong for these pages—had the following from independent sources, in writing:

"... (Two parties) failed there, the reasons being malaria and the attitude of the local Europeans."

"... The officials made me promise not to help others in my footsteps; ... —— (a local official) was a bit difficult to deal with."

"... The inhabitants are an independent crowd, and without police escort I doubt if you will get your kit carried."

"... I was with the policeman, and we had elephants, but even so we had the devil of a time on some of our marches."

Finally I obtained the entrée to this jealously-guarded region through a friend, a former official of those parts. On arrival at its portals it did not take me long to discover that, opposed to those local officials who were sporting and unselfish enough to help me and put me on to some of the best places, there were others to whom my presence was anathema; so, with some previous experience to guide me, I was particularly careful to make payments for coolies, etc., through local native underlings—or, when none were available, to disburse the coins personally and directly to payees, and generally to avoid giving any possible handle for complaint. Anyway, I had far less trouble than most people travelling in that difficult country, and my coolies bolted only once—and that at the instigation of a native police underling who had "established" himself in a remote corner and shunned the intrusion of any white man. However, the local "white" representatives

of Cerberus were bent on making capital out of my visit with a view to maintaining the notorious local attitude, and consequently ignored my repeated requests—both by letter and through the Press—to investigate the allegations of their anonymous mouthpiece.

I mention these rather ancient matters not as a "grouse" but as exemplifying the need, from every point of view, of a proper Indian Game Ordinance.

Under a well-regulated licence the injustice I have quoted could hardly have arisen; and a fixed limit to the numbers of various animals allowed to be shot would have obviated any controversial views on that subject.

Often, however, the trouble is merely a misunderstanding—as, for instance, when I met a Forest Officer, young enough to be my son, who, a sufferer from a badly poisoned mind, began by encountering me with the expression and attitude of a wild dog, but ended, after a little "heart to heart" talk, in offering me all the facilities that lay in his power!

There are, of course, two sides to this controversial subject, in which, roughly, civil officials and military officers occupy opposing camps. But the trouble is not really of the protagonists' making. It is the direct outcome of the lack of method in regulating the fine sporting estate at the disposal of the Government of India. Biased people aver that the lack of a properly adjusted Indian Game Ordinance is due to the fact that it would interfere with the shooting prerogatives of the officially powerful; and their view is to some extent borne out by the fact that whereas up to about thirty years ago the old-fashioned understanding of go-as-you-please and first-come-first-served worked quite satisfactorily, there is now a system of blocks and rotations—not to mention permutations and combinations—that has been evolved by only one class of potential shikaris.

I would suggest, however, that the lack of a proper ordinance may be due more largely to the fact that India groans increasingly under an incubus of paper, pens, and ink, reports

and pigeon-holes, and that probably there is a horror of adding yet another department of State, although such has long since been introduced by practically every other big-game country.

As things are at present, or were when I left India, seven years ago, this playing at " game-keeping " falls on the District and the Forest Officer ; and although I have no doubt at all that in some cases it is willingly put up with—for fairly obvious reasons—it must, generally speaking, prove a nuisance and lead to unpleasantness ; while, remembering India, I doubt that the additional work carries additional pay. Most Forest Officers must detest having to cater by order for the sport of wire-pullers.

Since criticism, to be useful, should be constructive, the following rough suggestions are made, with a hint that the Game Ordinances of Kenya and Tanganyika would repay study ; and those who are interested will probably acknowledge that something of the sort would go far towards ensuring a proper state of affairs—decreased friction, better game-keeping, and prevention of the native wile that delights in setting white men at loggerheads. Considering that, *inter alia*, there is revenue in it, it is inconceivable that such an asset has been so long neglected :—

A general Game Ordinance, including limitations and penalties, for all India—with special clauses for localities and conditions differing from the normal.

Scale of annual licence fees :

For British and Indian servants and ex-servants of the Crown, and for *bona fide* British and Indian residents, Rs.10 for small game, and Rs.60 for big game (the greater to include the less

For British visitors the above to be multiplied by 20, and for foreign visitors by 50.

Licence-holders to be entitled to shoot, anywhere in British India, big game within one specified area at a time, with a time-limit for each, on the general principle of first-come-first-served, personal presence to be obligatory.

Transport, supplies, and native co-operation to be on a strictly public footing of ordinary supply and demand, divorced from local official imprimatur, favour, or disfavour.

The Game Department to be directly under the Government of India, separate from other branches, in no way subject to District, Divisional, or Provincial control, and with its own Wardens to administer the Game Laws.

Sale of "trophies" to be made a penal offence, in or out of India.

In India game sanctuaries would not answer unless watched continually by a white man, my experience being that they provide fine opportunities for native poaching while keeping the sahib away—the latter, when one comes to consider the matter, being the best unofficial gamekeeper.

As to limitations, a couple of tigers for every completed or current year of Indian service is surely enough for any man. It is considerably more than the average keen shikari totals. This restriction would give the "small" man more opportunity of sharing in sport, and put an end to selfish arithmetical methods of those too advantageously placed.

To represent the normal tiger as destructive vermin, the plague of the country-side, "cuts little ice" with those who know. I am also sceptical of the annual figures representing humans killed by tigers. Moreover, the tiger has his definite place in Nature's scheme, and keeps down the rapidly multiplying numbers of crop-destroyers such as pig and deer. When I hear the multi-tiger man enlarging on the need of "keeping down tigers" I always wonder what he does with his skins. What *is* one to do with even fifty tiger-skins? Where is he or his relatives and friends going to put them all? *I take it that no true shikari ever contemplates that foul crime, the turning of trophies into money.*

The subject of big-game weapons is an interesting one;

but nowadays there is such multiplicity from which to choose, without much difference, that I will refrain from a tempting dissertation. For my own part, having tried most types of these weapons during the past forty years, since about 1906 my preference has been for the medium-bore H.V. magazine rifle. I was once very keen on finding an " all-round " rifle ; but such is not yet to be had. The nearest approximation seems to lie round about ·350 to ·400 bore, with varying charges. I find that for handiness, safety from dangerous animals, and humaneness—i.e. less chance of losing a wounded beast, I have been best served by a H.V. ·350 magnum, *magazine,* shooting the well-proved blunt-nosed 310-grain bullet as well as a pointed bullet of 225 grains, with greater velocity, for smaller animals at longer range.

A very remarkable development of the ultra-H.V. rifle is the American ·250/3,000 now about seven years old, which I would describe as a truly marvellous little tool. Some figures with regard to this rifle were given in *Game and Gun* for July 1927, page 367.

In youth my fancy went out for a while to Sam Baker elephant-rifles, etc., for those were days of " Sandow " ambitions and muscle-measurements. However, not being fleshy by nature, I soon discovered that neither my *latissimus dorsi* nor my *gluteus maximus* was equal to supporting the explosions of such heavy metal.

In reading the above I trust that nobody will imagine that I am " laying down the law," or " posing as an authority." I merely state my own little convictions, some reasons for which will be found about pages 202 and 216.

As for shot-guns : in 1902 my high-grade, 12-gauge choke-bore fell out of a *tonga* I was driving, and took a wheel over its Damascus barrels. In its place I got a ball-and-shot gun from Manton of Calcutta, cost £40, and peculiarly rifled—i.e. straight, shallow grooving for about two-thirds the way up the barrels and then a slight twist. Its cylinder boring surprised me by much improving on the shooting I had for years done with my cherished choke ; and the twenty-six year-old

gun is still in fine condition and manages to hold its own in these modern times. Its back-sight sometimes excites interest at covert-sides; when I have pleasure in explaining that it is one of the famous old Ouida grouse-rifles, the crack of which used to be heard on the moors.

I have already remarked on physical fitness in the tropics, and can only say that hard exercise and plenty of sweating there will never do a sound constitution any harm; although it may make one thin. Reverting a moment to past remarks on the beef-and-beer complex, I remember at one period of my career being associated with a number of Himalayan sportsmen, but in a very inferior southern climate, where the miserable little hillocks rose only a few thousand feet. At the foot of one of those mole-hills I regarded those hardy mountaineers with respectful awe; but, only a little later, my subconscious ego registered the single word—*Ah! And* that speargrass! . . .

Suitable clothing makes a lot of difference in sweaty jungles. I could never stand having my wrists and neck covered up. To support my nether garments with a belt (*hitchy-koo*) was anathema; braces the only thing. A loose shirt, very pretty and wild-westy, chafes breast nipples, and has many other disadvantages. A well-fitting medium winter vest—and no shirt—absorbs sweat and prevents discomfort and chills. Always a shikar-coat of close, tough, untearable stuff, buttoning at base of neck—unless you want the Little Boy Blue effect. Shorts I did not always care about, although good for climbing. Gaiters with room for calf-muscles; or "field" boots with soft uppers. Boots themselves preferably with stout, *rough* rubber soles, but strong nailed heels—which means silent tip-toeing and foothold, *plus* proper downhill plunging when required.

For the small reserve of cartridges carried on the person a useful idea—in absence of "clips"—is to have small cloth pads stitched together to form bandolier-like receptacles to

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take six rounds. A couple of such pads is usually sufficient. These obviate the rattling of cartridges carried separately in the coat pocket—which is about the only place where severe sweating cannot reach them. If one uses a non-magazine rifle, three or four rounds will have to be carried loose, or, risking sweat, in "bandolierlets," sewn on the *left* upper breast for quick loading. I never liked cartridge-belts.

References to shikar clothing makes me wish to get some of these modern "knuts" on a good hot hill-side. I want to see what they do with their long hair.

One needs to feed well when working hard in the jungle; and, when very hot, appetite requires a little coaxing. For all-day jaunts in hot weather I had a standard ration which always met with the approval of any friends who might accompany me and never failed to tempt the jaded. The *pièces de résistance* were a pie-dish of tasty, tender shepherd's pie, and another of bread-and-butter-pudding stiff with raisins. Biscuits, cheese, fruit, etc., to taste. Bread or sandwiches simply turn to toast in hot dry air. For drink I had large aluminium, felt-covered water-bottles. The tremendous sweating in hot jungle reveals a crystalline deposit of salts on one's clothing when dry, and my fad was that those salts needed replacement. My preference, therefore, was for oranges, *plus* Southwell's lime-juice mixed with lots of water.

On distant hot weather expeditions in the old days one's greatest lacks were fresh vegetables and fruit; while the old-fashioned thick, highly-sweetened condensed milk was very cloying. About twenty years ago, good tinned or bottled vegetables became easily available; also, I think, such things as "Ideal" milk: which made one's dietary better and safer. White men cannot safely "live on the country" in remote Indian jungles. That is what makes the old-time pioneering so wonderful. What privations and dangers those old fellows faced, when medical science, too, was very poorly equipped for the tropics!

As a young man I lost a few good skins by carelessness in not personally attending to their skinning, drying, etc. In the East, if you want a thing well done, do it yourself.

In dry weather few skins should give trouble in drying, provided that the ordinary rules are observed. Details may be had in other shikar-books and taxidermists pamphlets.

In damp, hot weather there is much more difficulty, even although skinning may have been carried out perfectly. Under such conditions the skin may be put into a receptacle and there immersed in a saturated solution of brine—or half-salt and half-alum solution; but it should be noted that taxidermists do not like alum-shrunk skins to work on. For convenience in camp and on trek, the receptacle may be small —as a five-gallon petrol-drum, or even a kerosene-oil tin. The sodden "green" skin should be well rubbed and covered with the salt, or salt and alum, on the flesh side, and then folded or rolled up, hair outside, and placed in the tin, it being important that the solution should always cover the skin and exclude air.

I found that after a fortnight's immersion one might safely allow the solution to evaporate; the skin then gradually dries and hardens in the tin, where it should remain—a very safe and convenient way of storage and transit until placed in the curer's hands. Sodden skins up to the size of a large leopard can be got into an ordinary paraffin-tin. Drums are better, especially if fitted with water-proof lid.

The skins of bears and other animals in very fat condition are always an anxiety. In this case the skin should have all the fat in view removed with the knife or other tool, and then be laid over the end of a "slooping-post" or smooth rounded log, the other end of which is stuck slantwise into the ground.

A curved band of metal or narrow-edged piece of hard wood should then be employed to scrape the skin forcibly downwards. During this process a liberal supply of dry wood-ash should be applied to the surface, the alkali of which will combine

with the fat and aid in its removal. Finally more wood-ash and salt should be rubbed in. Alum is useless in the case of a greasy skin.

One should never be persuaded to saw large horned skulls in half, for convenience of packing; for it is exceedingly difficult, if possible, to get the exact "set" of the head again. Better far to go to the expense of a crate or packing-case large enough to take the head complete. Smaller ones can be packed in the interstices.

Having been on the whole, if not consistently, unlucky throughout my Indian shikar, I have been brought to consider the subject rather carefully.

First, however, as has already been suggested, have easy triumphs the power long to hold fortune's favourites? Or is their cumulative effect cloying? Does the "lucky" shikari remain keen to the end?

Continued bad luck certainly has power, at least, temporarily, to undermine self-confidence, and therefore probably to interfere with straight shooting when the chance does come. And, in my experience, big game shikar is far from being an exact science or even an undertaking in which success can be definitely commanded by skill and application.

This, I think, is particularly the case in India, where, as a rule, game animals are not sufficiently plentiful to allow the law of averages to operate fully.

Other things being equal—i.e. time spent in shikar, good ground, equipment, and endeavour—it is suggested that the Indian percentages allottable work out fairly near to the following:

Pure chance	50
Marksmanship	30
Skill and woodcraft	20

This, with a little of the proverbial "mug's luck," should

serve to encourage those previously inexperienced but pos-
sessing a taste for the sport to take their chances philosophi-
cally ; and also make it plain that, whatever other qualifying
adjectives may be applicable to him, no man can logically be
called a " great hunter."

XI

"HIMSELF" AND "GRANDSON"

THEY were sambar—the big woodland rusine deer of India; height at shoulder, 4 feet 8 inches; weight, *cleaned*, about 420 lbs. (30 stone). "Himself" was e best stag of the whole of my thirty-one Indian years, d was shot in 1899. His "grandson," also the possessor of fine pair of antlers, fell to my rifle just twenty-two years er.

Knowledgeable shikaris will require some persuasion before mitting my claim that these two stags bore each other the ationship stated; and in these reminiscences I propose to oduce my evidence.

The old cantonment of Ellichpur lies in the Berar plain, at e southern foot of the Satpuras, about a hundred miles due st of Nagpur; and although long since given over to the ts, owls, and such other *fauna* that take possession of serted places, especially in tropical countries, was once, from e point of view of people like myself, a most delightful, l-fashioned, and desirable spot. Forgotten its bad climate d numerous other disadvantages, but enshrined in memory any a glorious day and night with both big and small game including that kingly sport, hog-hunting.

I was then a youngster in that jolly old corps, the Hyderabad ntingent; and besides Ellichpur we had other old-world, mfortable, sporting stations—most of which have gone the ay of the bats and owls.

Well, the "cold season" of that year had just set in, and the onsoon (scanty in 1899) was over—a dull, damp time for ikaris, who can do little but vaseline their weapons and ok forward to the fall of the leaf and drying of grass—to be rought about by the same old sun that one used to curse,

but which, after a few forgetful English years, we forgiv much; the intense sun of Indian "autumn," that shines the rain-washed sky, the sun that "turns the blackbuck coat black."

Morning parades, orderly room and office over, I returne to my bungalow for lunch—to find one of my Korku scou impatiently waiting with news of a "big big sambar in th Dhár Khóra!"

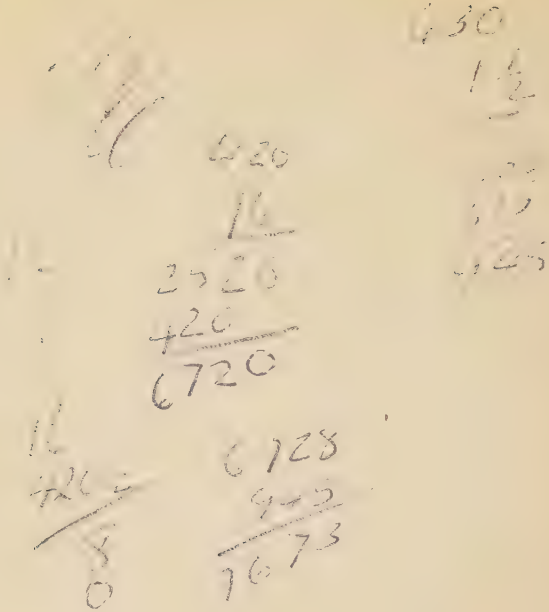
Instant action, and a five-mile ride, rising gently ov cultivated plain, took me to the foot-hills; and, leaving th road, and my mare by the mhowa-trees near the Korku hamle I legged it up the Burhanpur Valley, followed by about dozen men and boys who came running out of the villag grinning and significantly patting their little black bellies.

Every nook and cranny of this valley—as, indeed, of a those hills within many miles—did I know, and shall neve forget, and as we pushed along I was able to gather wher the stag had couched.

He had been seen by Raoji, one of my scouts, as he wa mounting to his lair just after sun-up. Kuddhi, the Bur hanpur *patél*, or headman, was insistent—and this tim actually right—that he was the biggest *dhánk* ever seen i those jungles.

We hurried along the narrow footpath that runs up th centre of the valley, following approximately the little rock river—the Bichan—now a mere trickle from pool to poo The hills rise steeply on each side for about 1,200 feet, wher reaching the main cap of black basalt, they tend to spread ou into rather more open table-lands; but their slopes are clothe in thick jungle, mostly of the dry and deciduous order. A this season they are rich with glowing "autumnal" colou just before leaf-fall. The grass, too, often chest high, i already turned to vivid tints of yellow and red, most of being "spear-grass," now at its cruellest, its surface matte with millions of the detestable little seed-vessels that fin their way through the smallest eyelet in boot or gaiter, and unless defeated by the most closely woven fabric, pin clothin

MOUTH OF BURHANPUR VALLEY



skin with deeply-buried little barbs. Underfoot a rough nd often rocky track, worn by generations of bare black feet, hat strikes hot, even through thick leather; overhead an tensely deep blue sky—for month upon month unflecked by oud.

The beauty of central Indian jungle colouring lies largely its simple but exceedingly effective "simultaneous contrast," ature painting largely in flat tints of blue, red, and yellow.

We cross the stream-bed at a sandy floor—as also, by the ay, do last night's tracks of a sloth-bear. Some pea-fowl, bout a dozen grey jungle-fowl, and once a four-horned antelope re seen as we press forward. Green pigeon and parrakeets re busy in certain berried trees. About two miles up the len the waterways part, and we take the left-hand turn. s we emerge from the pale yellow trunks of the aromatic *alai* jungle, and look down on a vista of flat rocks and pools, here looms up the shadowed recess of the Dhar ravine: but o the *cul-de-sac* where its stream comes dropping sheer over ve hundred feet of basalt cliff is still a long and winding mile.

As I look along Raoji's stubby black finger, it is as I had nought—the stag has his *baitak*, or form, among bamboo and rass well up the hill-side and above the denser growth, but ot within the dangerous blind alley of the Dhar—not for uch as he!

A footpath leading to the uplands of Bánúr straggles steeply p a sharp spur down the crest of which runs a clearing—a fire-line"—on which is a knob-like underfeature; and, in he "pow-wow" that ensues as to the natural run of our uarry and how to work things best, topography plays its ssential part.

Presently there is unanimous head-wagging, the plan is epeated so that all may grasp it well; then, with two Korkus, begin to ascend the Banur spur. The others, rousers rather han beaters, vanish silently up the narrow defile of the Dhar.

For those who do not know him, I would describe the ambar as a creature chiefly of the night; of late evenings nd early dawns; of moonlight visits to crops adjoining his

hilly jungle home; of crepuscular descents to the river flats where grow berries to his taste; of shadowy ways over park-like plateaus when jungle fruits abound; of phantom shapes that are heard to cross the stones by mango-arched pools in deep ravines; of cracklings in dry leaves of teak forest; and, at times of suspicion and fear, of the deep trumpet-note that stabs the tropic night—"Dhank!"

Almost all game animals of peninsular India are nocturnal in habit: but none more so than the sambar. You will find his great slot in the mud of the soiling pool, and the sapling frayed by his rough horn; but by the time you have had to interpose pith hat between skull and early sun he will be far up his hill-side, cunningly settled for the long sleepy day, carefully orientated with regard to shade, motionless save for slow turnings of large ears. His hinds and fawns—a very small family party—are at a distance, seldom even in the same ravine. One need hardly bother about them. There is practically no such thing as a herd of sambar.

With my regiment I had at this time already spent two years at Ellichpur, and, owing to famines, etc., we did not march away on relief until five years later; but I never grew tired of those beautiful hills. That was in the better days, before the system of allotting forest "blocks"—blocks sometimes in more senses than one—and those of us who wished to, were free to roam over the whole of those Satpura forests. Happy we who revelled in those glorious solitudes. The Burhanpur Valley, as my eyes roved over it, from the height at which I sat, already held some delightful memories, and with me will ever remain a satisfying mind-picture in all its seasonal moods.

So sat I there that hot afternoon, lucky young fellow, in the perfume of lemon-grass and warm jungle, until a distant yell sent hand to rifle. Those were the days of my intense interest in firearms, and across my knees lay one of the then quite new medium-bore cordite rifles—a double ·400. Slightly opening the breech, I verified the bases of two cartridges gleaming there.

No movement on the wooded slopes below; but an occasional tap of stick or little axe on tree-trunk came floating up at intervals. Indian shikar is full of blank days and disappointments, and one was always prepared for the worst—though hoping for the best. So, when luck turns, the pulse responds accordingly.

And to-day was good, and Diana kind; for soon came a chorus of yells from my dusky pack, and a crash in the bamboos.

I had complete command of the ground, and, unless the animal now afoot should break back or out at the side—not at all likely, owing to the shape of the Dhar—I controlled absolutely his "line"—within, that is, a couple of hundred yards up or down hill—my rôle being a rapid move in any direction to meet him.

A dark shape passing through the coppice on a spur far below me gives the clue required, and, getting behind the crest of my spur, I run softly downhill to forestall his chosen way. On such Indian afternoons the complication of wind is absent, and it is the ears of the sambar that always seem acuter than his eyes; that and his uncanny gift of judging the direction of danger—which have most to be considered. And I reach my position none too soon, for the moment that my eyes fall on the ground where I now expect to find him, there comes his heavy bulk stepping cautiously through a maze of thin trees and brushwood about 150 yards away and below. In this kind of work and country one must make the most of the first reasonably good opportunity—which may not recur—so the first report of the ·400 woke the echoes as the stag moved slowly across a fairly open space.

He plunges forward, lost to sight again. I dart downhill to head him, reloading as I go. Next moment he bursts through the fringe of jungle and emerges on the more open ground of the "fire-line," lumbering up the hill-side diagonally, with mouth open.

Pulling up, I miss shamefully with my right. His immense muscular energy redoubles. My rifle follows him, and just as he reaches the ridge I let go my left.

And now occurs an astonishing thing!

At this season there are nearly always some Korkus cutting grass in these hills—either fodder for cantonments, or *rausa* grass, which is rudely distilled into the basis for "lemon-grass oil." As my shot goes, the stag flinches and swerves, disclosing the amazing spectacle of a small black human figure that just dodges the galloping hoofs, drops his head-load, and races frantically for cover! Next instant stag and man have vanished, in opposite directions!

Of the man I may say that nothing further was ever heard; so, presumably, all ended well, despite my long and gloomy forebodings. As for the stag, he had gone too, and my Korkus were hot on his track; so, after anxiously searching and shouting awhile for the man—which probably only urged him to improve on his efforts to reach the next "county"—I followed them.

"Halt and listen" is a better motto for crackly, leaf-strewn jungle even than the famous "Wait and see," but it yielded no result, so we descended on the faint indications of the animal's passage until we reached the stream-bed of the next ravine. Here some slight "probabilities" led us left-handed, and finally, to cut a lengthy tale shorter, right across the main valley to its southern side.

On this hot and arduous trail we had at last found a few drops of blood; and later, on arriving at the declivity above the main stream—where a big boar momentarily raised my hopes by a startled plunge from his lair—a faint halloo reached my ears. Somebody was shouting excitedly, far away.

Thus, after about three hours of hard going, I was sweating cautiously through long grass and saplings, rifle at the ready, following the faint indications of displaced grass-stems—when up lurched the great stag sixty yards away, and made off at his best though now reduced speed. The Korku who had short-circuited his whereabouts was just behind me, and, yielding to the frantic ecstasy that is liable to overcome the Indian nervous system, he now clung to and violently shook my left arm and shoulder, with piteous yelps of "Shoot,

sahib, shoot ! " Poor Tika ! Sahibs' elbows are harder than bare barbarian bellies ! Yet, are not rupees and lots of sambar venison more potent still ?

And so it came about that I hit the stag hard with my right ; missing with my left just as he passed behind a hillock. Rushing madly on, cramming in cartridges, I came on him again, going groggily with head held low. One steady plug in the right place, an immense swerving bound, and he slithers crashing through a mass of brittle undergrowth into a little dry watercourse.

And there next moment I had him. To those who can appreciate such moments I need only say that he was my best sambar ; his unusually massive horns measuring 45½ inches.

The memory of him as he lay there is coupled with that of a very red-faced and breathless young man, his thin shooting clothes soaked black with sweat, mouth and throat parched dry, while, for the *n*th time, his eager fingers follow the contour of those glorious antlers in nine-inch spans.

So much for " himself," who may be seen in the last illustration in this volume, wearing his grandson's " mask " and occupying the central place of honour between a 38-inch chital and a swamp deer. But, before proceeding further with my tale, I wish to make a small confession to the effect that in a shikar-book first published in 1903 I concealed the true history of that, my best sambar, substituting for it that of another big stag shot elsewhere in the Satpuras. It would not have been fair to the garrison of Ellichpur to give away the Burhanpur Valley, which lay only five miles off—one of the finest sambar grounds existent.

And now, in musing over the story of " grandson," let me anticipate and make the points in my claim of the relationship of the two stags. To begin with, compare the photographs—" grandson's " being that taken where he fell, on December 13th, 1921. Types of sambar horn vary greatly, and may readily be grouped according to clearly recognisable characteristics. The two under notice belong to a not very

common type, and, except for slight variation in one tine, injured while in velvet, are replicas ; both show short brow-tines, long, thick, and unusually heavily-beaded beam, with rather short terminal fork. The colour, too, is an exact match. The sambar is in his prime at about ten years of age : twenty-two years separated these two. They not only inhabited the same valley, but owned the same territory in it *at the same time of year*, sambar being very conservative in this respect. That each should have been found in the same corner of the Dhar Khora, and that " grandson " took identically his ancestor's line out of it does not in itself point to anything more conclusive than the habits of the species ; but when added to the other coincidences it becomes significant.

On taking his pension—about all that was now worth having of a woefully depreciated India—and just before finally leaving the East, an old shikari in his fifty-second year paid a farewell visit to the jungles of his youth, in one of the few parts of the country that he felt sorry to see the last of.

Ellichpur furnished an object-lesson grim enough—but no more than a faint indication of the preliminary stage of the fate that would befall a sahib-less India. This alone had starkly impressed and dismayed the natives of the place—the ordinary decent folk that form more than 999 *per mille* of India's population. Over the ghastly appearance of the long-deserted cantonment, the many memories stirred by its ruins, and the meeting with the little band of old native friends who gave us pathetic welcome, we need not linger. On the departure of the sahibs the natural climatic helplessness of the East had at once reasserted itself. Barracks, bungalows, gardens, even the long avenue of giant bamboos and cork-trees, pride of our once trimly kept Mall, all had succumbed to the unopposed Indian decay—which had made still shorter work of the cantonment bazaars and local business. No time was lost in getting away from these depressing surroundings.

I went out and pitched camp under the familiar old mhowa

'GRANDSON'

rees at the mouth of the Burhanpur Valley, which was the ame as ever. Many old Korku friends of bygone days turned p, grinning. Kuddhi the *patel* still going strong, though very vizened. Little Ráoji, Tíka, and others had long since turned o Satpura dust. Days were now few to my final view of Bombay lights astern," and, if I was to secure a good head-kin for "himself" to replace that ruined by the Indian years, hey must all be days of endeavour.

I began by reconnoitring my old haunts in those splendid ills, starting before dawn and seldom returning before night-all; and, to my joy, found myself at least as capable as ver of a long day in a hot sun—and, what is more, consider-bly less dependent on food and water. Aware of the natural lindness of middle age to a falling off of the physical powers, had brought my old jungle diaries with me to compare xactly similar days over the same country; and they also onfirmed that I was well fitted to enjoy an approaching long ramp in equatorial Africa.

On the evening of December 12th we went up the valley to he *mél*, or junction of nullahs, and "dossed down" by a little ool in the forest—the more conveniently to push out scouts t the morrow's dawn. Abbas Khan, long since pensioned, ad "rejoined" for our very last shikar. There he was, the aithful old companion of yore, wiping over my rifle, laying out ny valise on the soft sand. Here in the watercourse, over-ung by trees, the evening peace was grey and dusky; but he woody heights of the Háthighát still reflected an orange low. Presently the grey jungle-cock had crowed his last 'I'll *fight* till I *whack* 'em"; and the sad calls of roosting ea-fowl—a sound, wherever heard, that always twinges the eart-strings of old jungle-wallahs—had died away. The Korkus crouched, talking low, over their fire, munching the arched gram that I had brought for them. I began to consume my evening meal.

It was difficult to believe that I had been so long away rom those familiar surroundings, that so much water had lowed under the bridges since last I had seen the old valley

—long years in the Punjab, on the North-West Frontier, the Far East, Kashmir. Then the War—France, East Africa, "Mespot." And here was I, back in the haunts of my twenties, still hale and hearty, still keenly receptive of every jungle sound, scent, and sight; and, with added experience of "human greenfly" and its messy problems, more than ever a devotee of the "wild."

Later, my back against the sand, and one of those old Indian cheroots in comfortable blast, I summoned my jungle friends to a talk. Long sat we there, old Abbas at my side, the others squatting round. Time is the prime factor in a jungle "pow-wow"—time, and long silences. *Inter alia*, I learnt that only one sahib had hunted the valley since 1904, and that but once, he being *chóta Kírkút sahib* of my Regiment. That induced a train of thought not entirely flattering to the civilians who had served in this district during the past seventeen years, including one, by the way, who, in my humble opinion, is the best naturalist-observer of central Indian game that has set pen to paper. For this valley was of all the Melghat hills the surest find for big sambar from October to March, possibly remaining so for all time. I also found that in 1921 tigers were more numerous in these outer Satpuras than during any of my Ellichpur years, 1897–1904.

It was only two days after this, by the way, that I received a notification from a native Forest underling to the effect that my presence in Burhanpur was "redundant," as the valley formed part of a "block" already reserved for other European officers. Be *swaráj* never so "non-co-operative," it seems to have no difficulty in producing Europeans to fill twenty-year hiatuses.

As night advanced the Korkus' fire died down, stirred occasionally by one of the watch that had been enjoined on no account to miss the morning star. Even the blanketed figure of my old orderly was now prone. I do not know how long I lay wakeful there, under the tropic stars, visualising old memories of the jungle, delighting again in its wonderful spell, its mysterious night sounds, listening to its ceaseless

insect trill. Then, far away, a sambar belled. Twice I heard it, echoing along the sleeping hills, at long intervals—"Dhank!" . . . thrice. . . .

The sun was well over the eastern ranges, but still I awaited report from my scouts whom, in parties of three each, I had despatched to various points of vantage before dawn. The due observance of a "report centre" involves some masterly inactivity: nor does it pay to hurry off on the first hopeful summons. One should wait until all messengers are in, when —if the moon-goddess be unusually gracious—a considered choice may be made; also alternative plans, in case the first be abortive.

This morning my luck was dead in: for no less than two urgent calls reached me—one from the Kachnár khora, the other from the Dhar. On its merits I decided first to follow up news of a big stag seen in the latter, dismissing a passing fancy that history might repeat itself; for, though ever a sanguine shikari, my worst enemy could not call me a lucky one. Yet, from the first, to-day's conditions closely resembled those of 1899. Nor, with increase of woodcraft, did my tactics differ. Again the rousers started on their encircling movement. Again I placed my "stops" on the lower slopes. Again I took post well up the same fire-line spur, and for the same reason—easier for me, if required, to run down than up.

This time my rifle was one of the latest developments in high velocity, known as the ·250/3000, with Mauser action, and I will merely mention that I had got it a year previously as an interesting toy, for small fry only, but that it had already proved itself astonishingly more efficient and powerful than that.

After examining my surroundings, I sat down to watch, and, aware of the long detour to be made by the rousers, unloaded, and occupied myself in aiming and snapping. Some ten minutes later, still so engaged, I became aware that one of the "stops" had left his post and was standing on the spur below. The other soon joined him, and they began to

talk and look about. Angrily I was about to signal them back to their places when one saw me and beckoned in so casual a manner that I descended without haste—*and*—oh, oh, old shikari !—without getting in a cartridge from the magazine !

As I reached the Korkus and overlooked the slopes below I uttered an exclamation of horror ; for there, black against the yellow grass of the clearing, horns laid over his shoulder, gazing fixedly up at us, stood a great stag !

Next instant he plunged away. Loading up like lightning, I got the foresight on him ; but already he was diving under the trees. My trigger finger relaxed.

He was off on his grandfather's line, down into the Ghardári ravine ; and I, well remembering the lie of the ground, was after him, hell-for-leather, making for the brow of the steep fall that overlooked his retreat. As I sprang off, raging, I dealt out a sharp backhander to the nearer of the idiots—unworthy successors of my trusty old pack—and had the satisfaction of seeing them both go sprawling.

Running through a maze of *salai* and small teak, and bearing a " bow-wave " of dried grass piled up on my chest, I reached my objective and hastened to the edge, where I instantly halted to listen. Sure enough, a well-known leaf-crackling rose from the depths of the ravine, four or five hundred feet below ; and, some minutes later, a dark object leisurely crossed its rocky watercourse and faded into the thickets at the foot of the opposite slopes. Lucky that I had withheld my fire ! The stag had suffered no great alarm from one of his " chance meetings with grass-cutters." The sun was high and hot. He would soon seek another lair. He had not finished with us yet !

A couple of hundred feet below was a grassy ledge affording closer yet equally comprehensive command of the jungle into which " grandson " had disappeared, and, reaching it, I seated myself to watch, being careful to judge some ranges, and think out further action.

Nothing stirred. Day was well advanced, and the all-pervading shrilling of cicadas seemed only to accentuate the

windless silence that held those densely-wooded declivities in their sun-stricken siesta.

There passed an hour, more or less: then a stealthy step in the dead leaves and old Kuddhi crept to my side, ever his shrewd self, perfectly in touch with the situation. His son, a sharp youth, was presently summoned from his post in a neighbouring tree and sent with fresh orders to the Korkus, now assembled at one of the lower Dhar pools.

I now learnt that the stag had been prematurely disturbed while the men were getting round the Dhar, and had sneaked away long before they started to sweep it out. Kuddhi also had some quaint remarks to make about the fiasco on the fire-line, of which, from afar, he had been a helpless spectator. Thus another half-hour passed. Yet another, and the rousers might be expected in position for the next manœuvre. Shifting into shade as the sun came round, we continued our patient watch and ward.

Suddenly—oh, thrice lucky day!—*I saw the beggar!* His dark brown hide very slowly passed a little break in the covert at least three hundred yards away, and well to the right of where I had last seen him. He, scathless, had gone *up* the Ghardari; whereas his grandparent, wounded, it will be remembered, had turned down it, refusing the hill.

I loathe long shots. By no means a "dead shot," I prefer to draw on my fund of low cunning, and get so near that I can't miss! Yet, in such country, a steady plug at reasonable sporting range—especially with such a weapon as I was carrying—is preferable to the close and hurried snap in covert, from which many an animal escapes to a lingering death.

"There he goes!" I muttered, somewhat unnecessarily, to Kuddhi, following the stag's progress as, now visible, now hidden, he crept along an opposite but considerably lower contour. I could see my chance coming, and presently he emerged in a small open space, and, standing to drive the flies from his flank, gave me a clear broadside view.

At the first shot—which must have been a huge surprise—he backed slightly; then broke into a lunging canter.

Another careful one I let go as he again emerged in sight. At that up went his yellow-lined tail, and he turned sharply downhill, disappearing into thick stuff.

Pausing a moment to shout loud instructions—which Kuddhi would repeat—to any men within hearing, whose ears would now be well pricked, I went slithering down a vilely steep and iron-hard hill-side strewn with bamboo debris and grass that concealed a multitude of small "ball-bearing" stones, the trunks of saplings alone affording the occasional check that saved a headlong dive. With but one fall—but no harm to the ·250—I reached the dry bottom of the Ghardari, and turned up it, following a faint foot-track that aided progress over its flood-torn surface. That "tail and turn downhill" had stimulated a large hope and whetted every hunting sense.

And now came one of the few events in a lifetime of shikar that may betray even old hunters to a passing self-complacency! As I sweated and stumbled a quarter-mile up that stifling ravine, quite alone—for the bare toes of Kuddhi and Co. cannot match my boots in such headlong descents—my eye lit on a single dark spot, smaller than a threepenny-bit, on one of the boulders I was passing by. Trap rock shows many such marks. But for this one I stopped dead; and succeeded in testing it with a rather dry tongue.

Blood! . . . hard dried instantly, of course, in this burning sun . . . but blood! . . . and the dust slightly disturbed . . . and, under crushed teak-leaves, the impression of a wide-splayed slot!

Checking the impulse to a triumphant yell for Kuddhi and his best trackers, I fumbled for my whistle. . . . Then, standing to listen, I could see that except for a thirty-yard slope on each densely-tangled bank the sheering sides of the little valley had become almost vertical and that no wounded beast would face them.

With a quick padding of horny feet the first lot of my aborigines began to arrive—"Get on his track!" I gasped, index finger to ground. "I'm off up to head him!" But

even as I broke into a run there came a stirring in the bamboos o my right, and, whipping round, I saw everybody silently, vildly, gesticulating and pointing.

It was he! And that wonderful little tool had done the rick again!

When hard on the heels of a wounded animal in such ground, vhere, in a couple of strides, even an elephant might vanish never to be seen again, undue haste or commotion may result n the prize being snatched away as the hand goes out to grasp t. I therefore moved alone, silent and slow; and before long vas duly rewarded. The stag had doubled on his track after crossing the nullah, and I found him hobbling craftily back long the slope at the foot of the steep that baulked him.

On the many "ifs" and "ands," of why he crossed the ell-tale path, and all the rest of it, we need not enlarge. It vas simply "my day."

Now dry, dense coppice enmeshed everything, and, before he enormous velocity of the tiny bullet, an obstructing stem lissipated into sawdust. But other shots got through. There vas a rending of branches, and my quarry seemed to subside n a gully.

And now nothing could hold my excited Korkus; their heads obbed up everywhere, like a pack of wild dogs. I went crambling higher, desperate to make an end of it, and racked vith anxiety lest Diana play me one of her eleventh-hour ricks. And, sure enough, before I could reach him, the ambar, amid the execrations of his little black foes and a hower of Korku axes, crashed off downhill!

Mad with mortification, I bulled through the jungle in a headlong pursuit, and presently found myself back in the ullah—with all touch lost. There was dead silence. He vas clean gone!

At such a moment (this ravine affording a seldom-used short ut to Burhanpur) a wretched Banur Korku must needs naterialise from nowhere, bathed in a cold sweat at my ap- pearance and language, and holding on to, of all things, a *ow*, that wildly plunged and snorted at the end of a cord!

To this also arrives a breathless and wide-eyed Abbas Khan. At sixty-five years of age the old boy has to avoid the big fences—but is usually in at the death.

And so it is, good luck to him, to-day; for, glory be, I have only overrun the stag. And next moment, in a storm of shouts and splintering of undergrowth, the great hart totters forth, heading blindly for us through the trees.

A shot in the neck at fifteen paces, and he is down! Typical, however, of such cases, the end is not even yet. Moreover, old Abbas being very anxious on this last of all our hunting to carry out the ceremony of *halál*, the united efforts of myself and several Korkus are required to hold down the powerful deer, as much to save injury to antlers as for the old bigot with the knife.

During a desperate struggle, mingled with my shouted prohibitions of the orthodox ear-to-ear gash, the frantically kicking stag keeps the dust and stones fairly flying, one young boulder scattering the little crowd gathered round. Finally, with the words of the Prophet in his ear and the Moslem steel in his brisket, "grandson" indignantly parts with his great buxom life—all brawn and buttocks to the last, grower of the shaggiest mane I have seen on his like, and owner of a pair of horns little inferior to those of his illustrious ancestor.

'HIMSELF'

F C Hicks 40 yrs amg animals of India
p 74